DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 695 EA 029 476

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TITLE	Comprehensive Reform: A Guide for School Leaders.
INSTITUTION	North Central Regional Educational Lab., Oak Brook, IL.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	53p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	New Leaders for Tomorrow's Schools; v5 n2 Spr 1998
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; *Educational Change; Educational Finance; Educational Improvement; Educational Objectives; *Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Program Development; School Administration; School Effectiveness; *School Restructuring
IDENTIFIERS	Coalition of Essential Schools; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory; Paideia; Success for All Program

ABSTRACT

This expanded issue explores well-known comprehensive school reform models and provides tools and resources to assist school leaders in choosing reform programs. Case studies provide information about three well-known models: the Coalition of Essential Schools, the Paideia Program, and the Success for All Program. These reforms are discussed in light of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRDp), which provides funds for reform in schools that meet the program's criteria. Other articles include "Comprehensive Reform: A Guide for School Leaders" and "Conversations with Three Educational Leaders: Comprehensive Reform and Educational Transformation," which describes interviews with Robert Slavin, Theodore R. Sizer, and Terry Roberts. An insert entitled "FAQ: Comprehensive School Reform," a questionnaire designed to assist school leaders in planning reform, and contact information for the three featured programs are provided. (MKW)

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New

LEADERS

FOR TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS

Dear Reader:

Between July 1, 1998, and September 1, 1999, schools and districts in the NCREL region will have access to approximately $26 million in additional Title I dollars through their state departments of education. This money, made available through an amendment to the FY1998 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Act sponsored by Congressmen David Obey and John Porter, is intended to "jump-start" comprehensive school reform efforts in schools. The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (CSRDp) also provided funding for NCREL to build and expand the support system needed for educators to evaluate and adopt research-based comprehensive school reform models tailored to their local conditions and needs.

This expanded issue of *New Leaders for Tomorrow's Schools* explores a number of well-known comprehensive school reform models and provides an in-depth study of three—the Coalition of Essential Schools, the Paideia Program, and Success for All. Through these three case studies, we hope to share with you the range of options available to schools and districts. It is also crucial for districts, schools, and their communities to understand their own values and goals in order to choose among the research-based options available to them. This *New Leaders* provides tools and resources to help you make that choice.

At NCREL we know school improvement efforts—comprehensive and R&D based—can make a significant difference. They can turn a school around. Over the past five years, NCREL has worked with local school improvement teams in more than 30 sites, including over a dozen watch-list schools in Chicago, in undertaking successful whole school reform that results in increased student achievement. NCREL guides schools as they examine school improvement options based on a systematic assessment of their needs. We help teachers and schools assess their readiness for intervention and select improvement programs and strategies that are most likely to be successful given their context and needs. School improvement teams can then select the combination of interventions that will best address root problems and result in improved learning. NCREL has helped schools adopt programs (e.g., Success for All) as well as curriculum (e.g., University of Chicago's Everyday Math) that have led to schools meeting their learning goals. We stay for the long haul to help coordinate reform efforts, to study what works and what doesn't, and to capture this wisdom so that other schools and districts can learn from these efforts.

continued

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We fundamentally agree with the premise of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program. It is preferable to engage the entire system of a school in coherent change rather than "tinkering" with different parts of the system, such as the math program, class size, or technology. Our experience with school change, through design consultation and external partnerships, has prepared us for our role in expanding the support system necessary to move comprehensive school reform to scale in the Midwest. We will continue our work with schools implementing whole school reform in a number of sites around the region. However, we will also partner with state education agencies, educational service agencies, and developers of comprehensive school models to build the capacity for moving answers to schools and communities in the Midwest. The supply side must grow in efficiency and reach if we are to match successful programs with all the schools and districts that need and want them.

The CSRDp provides all of us struggling with how to scale up best practice in education with a new incentive to work together. Our role as a regional resource for state and local educators has helped facilitate new relationships between state education agencies in the NCREL region, between intermediate service agencies and local schools, and between school reform developers, state agencies, and local districts. This dialogue and coordination of people and resources around a reform initiative is one of the great benefits of the CSRDp. In order to build capacity for this reform, NCREL is working to ensure resources are available across the Midwest to support this initiative and that we base our work on each state's unique perspective.

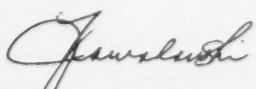
Finally, as a regional laboratory, NCREL serves a strategic support role, providing training, technical assistance, research and best practice information to support schools and districts in their CSRDp change efforts. We have developed a special set of resources to help them study their options and apply for CSRDp grants. These include:

- Video presentations by the model developers included in the legislation
- A two-part video overview describing all 17 of the designs
- A local needs assessment tool on how to make good choices concerning comprehensive school reform for your school
- A catalog of both programmatic and curriculum-based reform models
- A detailed Web site devoted to the CSRDp

This issue of New Leaders is another tool to help you consider and adopt successful comprehensive school reform approaches. We hope you will find the essays, interviews, school stories, and planning tool useful in your quest to implement comprehensive school reform.

We welcome your feedback on this edition of New Leaders and other NCREL resources and invite you to visit our Comprehensive School Reform Initiative Web site at www.ncrel.org/csri. You can direct your comments to us at info@ncrel.org.

Sincerely,



Jeri Nowakowski
Executive Director

New LEADERS
FOR TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS

SPECIAL Edition

Photo, PhotoDisc

Comprehensive Reform: A Guide for School Leaders

This expanded issue of *New Leaders* explores three well-known comprehensive school reforms: the Coalition of Essential Schools, the Paideia Program, and Success for All. We discuss these reforms in light of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRDp), which provides funds for substantive, sustained, and comprehensive reform in schools that meet the program's criteria.

We feature these reform programs because they emphasize curriculum and instruction as key variables for raising student achievement. The reform process may involve altering school structures, reconfiguring school staff, and rethinking and reallocating resources but the most critical element remains student learning.

This issue begins with an overview of the three reforms—their philosophies and strategies, and the conditions that influence their effectiveness. For a different perspective, we interview the educational leaders who spearheaded these reforms: Robert Slavin, Theodore R. Sizer, and Terry Roberts. Each discusses how his reform differs from others, under what conditions it is most successful, what is required of schools before and during their investment in the reform, and how to evaluate the reform's success.

Next, we go inside three schools that have implemented these reforms in urban, rural, and suburban districts: Lackland City Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas; Northport Public School, a rural K-12 school in Northport, Michigan; and Madison Elementary School in McLeansville, North Carolina.

We then integrate this information through a practical planning tool intended to help school leaders who will apply for funds under the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program. This planning tool adheres to the criteria outlined in the program's application guidelines. We conclude this issue with a selected bibliography of additional resources.

Comprehensive Reform: A Guide for School Leaders

Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood

If you are a school leader in any U.S. public school except the most affluent and privileged, it is highly probable that you are beset with a multitude of problems that erode the quality of education—and daily life—in your school. Typically, these problems are not small; in fact, they can loom so large that they seem insoluble, beyond the expertise of staff members, and outside the school's purview. Particularly if your school is located in an inner city or poor rural environment, your students may carry special, pressing needs with them to school.

The ferocity of these needs—along with constant pressure on school staff to find funds and support for even the most minimal innovation—can crush staff's morale and sense of efficacy. Your school population may have an abundance of students from low socioeconomic households; their families may confront pernicious unemployment or underemployment; a high percentage of your student body may be English language learners and/or recent immigrants facing cultural and linguistic adjustments; your dropout rate may be unacceptably high; and, if you are an elementary school, far too many of your students may not be able to read with understanding by the end of the third grade.

No matter how well-intentioned or devoted to teaching, your staff may have exhausted their problem-solving strategies. As daily, external pressures multiply, curricular and pedagogical innovations can seem daunting—if not impossible to achieve.

As a school leader, you face a myriad of external pressures as well: demands for heightened achievement, new state and local standards for content and student performance, and public displeasure with the quality of schooling their children receive. School safety requires your attention, as do crumbling buildings and outdated facilities. And it is your responsibility not only to lead any reform that might be implemented in your school, but to convince educational stakeholders it is necessary—as well as seek the funds to support innovation.

But now you—and other school leaders like you—have an opportunity to leverage reform in a sustained and coherent fashion. Funding reform efforts in schools like yours is the purpose of the U.S. Department of Education's new Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (CSRDp), which gives schools the opportunity to compete for funds to sustain comprehensive and coherent reform. Some facts about the CSRDp:

- Signed into law as part of the 1997 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriation Act, CSRDp will award each qualifying school at least $50,000 per year, renewable for three years.
- These funds will support technical assistance and start-up costs of the selected comprehensive reform model.
- The legislation places a special emphasis on Title I schools serving disadvantaged students, although other schools qualify as well (Title I schools are slated to receive $120 million; Title I and all other schools are eligible for the remaining $25 million).
- State educational agencies (SEAs) will support the implementation of effective, research-based reform programs

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in eligible schools through competitive grants. *(For more detailed information, please see the FAQ insert.)*

What is comprehensive reform? How does it differ from programmatic approaches to school improvement? Comprehensive reform differs from other approaches to school improvement in that it is systemic, research based, has a record of effectiveness, and seeks to change the entire school—not just a particular content area or special program. Comprehensive reform can be considered synonymous with other terms frequently used by educators and policymakers, such as systemic or whole-school reform.

The Porter-Obey legislation lists nine components that reforms must include in order to be considered comprehensive:

- Effective, research-based methods and strategies
- Comprehensive design with aligned components (including instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management)
- Professional development
- Measurable goals and benchmarks that are linked to the state's content and student performance standards
- Support within the school for the reform
- Parental and community involvement
- External technical support and assistance
- Evaluation strategies
- Coordination of resources

Many reforms qualify as comprehensive under the Porter-Obey legislation. It is beyond the scope of this publication to examine and evaluate each reform. For that reason, we limit our examination to three reforms, selected from a careful set of criteria: the Coalition for Essential Schools, Success for All, and the Paideia Program. Because the research points to changes in curriculum as one of the strongest levers to bring about substantive improvement in a school, we chose these reforms primarily for their emphasis on curriculum and instruction. In addition, all three are marked by:

- A research-driven set of beliefs about reform
- A comprehensive philosophy that views the entire school as the agent for change
- External technical support and assistance
- Longevity (each has existed for a number of years)
- An emphasis on professional development, which is considered a key component of the reform
- Scope (each has been implemented or selected for use at a large number of sites nationally)

In addition, each of these three reforms is distinguished by the belief that through changing the face of teaching and learning—and significantly altering classroom practices—student achievement will be boosted for all students, including the most disadvantaged.

We first provide a brief synopsis of each of these three reforms, focusing on their central beliefs and strategies. We follow these synopses with an overview of research on the effectiveness of each reform. We ask: Under what conditions are these reforms particularly promising or effective? What obstacles impede their success—and how might these be avoided? To what extent is the match between the school's needs and the philosophy or structure of the reform significant? We conclude this essay by discussing key issues that school and district staff should consider as they choose a comprehensive reform.

Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood, an education writer and analyst, is an Honorary Fellow in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. She is the author of numerous educational reports, monographs, and articles as well as four books: Conversations With Educational Leaders: Contemporary Viewpoints on Education in America *(State University of New York Press, 1997),* Tracking: Conflicts and Resolutions *(Corwin Press, 1996),* Character Education: Controversy and Consensus *(Corwin Press, 1997), and* Standards: From Policy to Practice *(Corwin Press, 1998).*

Currently CES is active in over 1,043 schools internationally, although that number includes schools in different stages of the reform process.

CES schools are distinguished by level: "Member" or "Essential" schools, schools in the "planning/networking" stage, and schools at the "exploring" stage.

Approximately 238 schools are Member schools (implementing new practices based on the Ten Common Principles of Essential Schools), 266 are Planning schools (networking and planning for change based on the Essential Schools Principles), and 539 are Exploring schools (just beginning to discuss and explore the Ten Common Principles).

Three Reforms: Synthesis and Summary

The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). Founded at Brown University in 1984 by the former Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Theodore R. Sizer, the Coalition of Essential Schools began its efforts with a focus on high schools, although it has since expanded into the lower grades. However, it is best known for its work in high schools—which both popular wisdom and research have long considered the most resistant to change.

CES places a premium on reform that comes from the grassroots and maintains a respectful attitude toward the local context and community. Central to the Coalition's philosophy is the primary belief that no two good schools are alike (Sizer, 1989).

The Coalition's ten principles highlight the importance of school climate, curriculum, pedagogy, and expectations. CES also advocates eight organizational principles intended to govern the behavior and beliefs of member schools as well as the national CES office. These beliefs range from the importance of documenting change efforts using a combination of objective, subjective, and performance-based data to more generic philosophical beliefs such as valuing local wisdom and responding with flexibility to local contexts. CES values collaboration and "critical friendship," as well as the need to personalize instruction through reducing the size and scope of schools and classrooms (CES literature, 1998).

The Coalition's work revolves around the importance of changing school structures to accommodate the ten principles. For example, if schools agree with the CES view of the "student-as-worker," this affects the curriculum as well as the daily schedule (Sizer, 1989). In an ideal CES school, long-held and unquestioned practices yield to smaller class sizes; personalization; professional sharing among teachers; and collaborative conceptions of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Coalition staff support educators but also expect them to join CES networks and actively share ideas, primarily through sustained dialogue about professional issues.

In order to become part of the Coalition, schools must:

- Present a plan for change that is consistent with the Ten Common Principles.
- Create opportunities for multiple leadership within the school.
- Share practices and lessons learned with other schools, including the collection of evidence that will guide the change effort and support learning, planning, and adjustment actions in the school.
- Address issues related to equity, such as race, class, and gender, in explicit ways.
- Involve the district and/or board in the reform process.
- Engage in ongoing self-assessment that addresses progress toward implementation of the Ten Common Principles and eight organizational principles.
- Affiliate with and participate in a regional Coalition center.
- Demonstrate willingness to participate in the governance and work of the regional center.
- Engage in ongoing review and affirmation of membership in CES, both within the school and with other schools (CES literature, 1998)

Success for All. Success for All (SFA) is a comprehensive, schoolwide reform program developed by Robert Slavin and his colleagues at Johns Hopkins University for use at the elementary level, with a special focus both on reading and students at risk of academic failure. SFA believes that all children must read at grade level by the end of the third grade, and all its strategies point toward that end.

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Students are not allowed to fall behind; assessments administered at eight-week intervals monitor their progress. A 90-minute, highly structured period devoted to reading is an inviolate aspect of the reform. Students are divided into groups that match their achievement levels and are moved according to their eight-week assessments, although the program does not believe in moving children backward. The assessments also help tailor the curriculum and help staff decide when family support interventions are necessary.

Tutors who are certified and who have received special training work one-on-one with students who fall behind their peers in reading, with priority given to first-grade students because of the importance the program places on early and aggressive intervention. A full-time facilitator oversees the implementation of the reform, works directly with teachers, coordinates the eight-week assessments, plans and implements staff development, and assists the Family Support Team.

This Family Support Team is a key part of Success for All. The team is composed of the principal or assistant principal, facilitator, social worker, and other personnel as needed. Its task is to further parent involvement, develop plans to help students who experience difficulty making appropriate progress, and integrate community/school resources. This social component of SFA is designed to free teachers for instructional work and not burden them with extra demands on their time.

SFA also is available in Spanish, which takes into consideration the large number of Hispanic students often present in Title I schools. Title I funds often are used in SFA schools to support and pay for the SFA implementation.

SFA is clear about what it requires from a school before a school can become an SFA site. Specifically, schools must be willing to:

- Sponsor an awareness presentation by an authorized program representative.
- Invest in an initial three-day training for all teachers prior to the advent of the program.
- Ensure that teaching staff vote by secret ballot to ensure that SFA is the reform of choice (80 percent minimum must concur).
- Work with SFA consultants during the school year (three onsite, two-day visits in which consultants work with staff on program components).
- Commit start-up funds of approximately $70,000 (for a school of 500 students) in the first year for training and materials, which can be covered by Title I, Porter-Obey funds, or other resources) (SFA literature, 1998)

The Paideia Program. The Paideia Program grew out of the writings and ideas of American educator and philosopher Mortimer Adler and is now supported by the National Paideia Center (NPC). NPC was founded in 1988 and is housed at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Its purpose is to provide training and technical assistance in Paideia methods, continue research on the results of Paideia methods when implemented in schools, and act as a clearinghouse for schools establishing Paideia programs (Paideia literature, 1998).

The philosophy of the Paideia Program adheres to the overarching belief that a democratic society needs to provide an excellent education to all students. Adler expressed some beliefs considered fairly radical for the time in his *Paideia Proposal* (1982), such as the commitment to heterogeneous instruction. Adler argued that all schooling should be one-track, not differentiated. He also pointed out that learning is not finite or static, but ongoing and lively. For that reason, he asserted, the educational system must prepare students to become lifelong learners—and adults who are charged with the education of youth must adopt a similar attitude. The Paideia Program's goals have remained constant over the years: to provide a rigorous liberal arts education in grades K-12 that will enable critical thinking and provide the skills necessary for full participation in a democratic society (Paideia literature, 1998).

Structurally, the Paideia Program believes in block scheduling, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary unit planning, and heterogeneous group instruction. It advocates student self-governance; student discipline is

The Paideia Program's goals have remained constant over the years: to provide a rigorous liberal arts education in grades K-12, that will enable critical thinking and provide the skills necessary for full participation in a democratic society.

administered through conflict resolution and student governance. The Paideia Program strongly encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. The program developers maintain that these structural and philosophical changes, along with increased collaboration between staff, will improve the quality of instruction.

Paideia views the classroom and interaction between students and teachers as the key linchpin that will connect reform for the entire school. Specifically, the Program advocates three types of teaching:

- Didactic instruction (which should be relegated to a minimum of the school day and kept as interactive as possible)
- Coaching (which is seen as learning by doing and is supported by a variety of techniques such as labs, cooperative learning, and project-centered teaching and learning
- Seminars (which are advocated as a regular instructional method and seen as the vehicle that will bring about the greatest educational transformation)

The Paideia Program speaks of "three columns," that list goals and how they might be achieved:

- Acquisition of organized knowledge (through didactic instruction)
- Development of intellectual skills (through coaching, exercises, and supervised practice)
- Enlarged understanding of ideas and values (achieved through socratic questioning and active discussion of books (not textbooks), other works of art, and involvement in artistic activities (Adler, 1982, p. 23)

Seminars are especially key to the Paideia philosophy. These seminars use great books and literature rather than textbooks. Civil disagreements are encouraged; students always refer back to the text and must be able to articulate and defend their positions. The teacher encourages and facilitates critical thinking and open dialogue.

The Paideia Program maintains minimum requirements for schools that wish to implement it as a reform, which include:

- An awareness presentation by a Paideia Center representative
- An affirmative vote by secret ballot of at least 80 percent of school staff
- Start-up funds for training and materials of approximately $50,000 to $70,000 depending on size of the school
- A full-time Paideia facilitator who teaches, at most, one class
- Commitment to a peer-coaching program to support implementation of the reform (National Paideia Center literature, 1998)

Three Reforms: Research on Effectiveness

How does a school leader decide which comprehensive reform is best suited to his or her school? A selective review of key research helps guide this important decision. In the following section, we seek answers to these central questions: How effective are each of these three comprehensive reforms? Are there conditions under which each is more or less effective? Are there conditions not immediately obvious that impede or hinder the progress of a comprehensive reform?

Stringfield, Millsap, and Herman (1997) conducted a three-year longitudinal study that examined special strategies for educating disadvantaged children to see if specific programs or restructuring designs would increase the achievement of children at risk of academic failure. Their study included the three comprehensive reforms studied in this issue. Their main findings included the following:

- Each program had clear strengths, but there was considerable variation in both implementation levels and effects at different sites.
- Allowing "transfer with dignity" for faculty who did not endorse a particular reform was often helpful.
- Long-term, targeted technical assistance was often key to program implementation.
- Reforms that concentrated on early-grade interventions tended to obtain larger achievement gains from students at risk than did programs that spread resources over all elementary grades or secondary schools.
- Schools using externally developed reforms in the early grades tended to achieve greater academic gains than in those using locally developed programs.
- Title I funds were an important source of revenue for reforms or programs that otherwise would not be fiscally possible.

Of the three comprehensive reforms examined in this publication, these findings have the most positive implications for Success for All, an externally developed program that focuses on the early grades. The authors report that low-performing students enrolled in Success for All surpassed the 50th percentile by the end of grade three (Stringfield et al., 1997, pp. 20-22) even though they began with reading comprehension levels below the average for low-achieving students in high-poverty schools.

However, Stringfield and his colleagues point out that there is no simple scale of effectiveness because different reforms target different outcomes. CES, for example, is devoted to "higher levels of thoughtful knowledge and skills" (1997, p. 22), while other programs or reforms have much more modest or limited aspirations.

Even the most promising comprehensive reform, such as Success for All, can see positive scores diminish when the program's implementation is interrupted or uneven. Variables that hinder positive results include rapid turnover of administrative staff, lack of commitment to a particular reform, continuous "shopping" for new programs or reforms, and fragmented community/district support for a reform.

This finding has the strongest implications for the Coalition of Essential Schools. At each of the five high school sites studied by Stringfield and his colleagues, the reform under scrutiny was implemented only partially due to scattered commitment (1997, p. 27). Reforms that demanded a multi-level commitment prior to implementation, such as Success for All, fared better.

Because CES has focused primarily on high schools, another finding from the Stringfield study needs to be considered. Reforms that concentrate resources on students before a pattern of failure has been established were more successful than reforms that began their efforts at the later grades (1997, p. 35). Since Paideia is also a K-12 comprehensive reform, this conclusion has indirect implications for it as well, depending on the level at which it is instituted. It also should be noted that CES has extended its efforts into the lower grades.

No CES sites in the Stringfield study could report a pattern of academic gain on the CTBS Reading Comprehension and Mathematics tests used in the study (p. 37). The authors note, however, that CES does not place a high value on standardized test scores or believe that they adequately measure what the Coalition is trying to achieve—which is significant when measuring a reform's success via standardized test scores.

The finding that externally developed designs overall resulted in greater academic gains than locally developed reforms also has some significance for CES, which believes that lasting reform must come from the grassroots and is intensely local in nature. Stringfield and his colleagues point out that schools can draw strength from their affiliation with an external reform; tight connections seem to buffer these schools from a variety of local pressures (p. 38).

The optimistic nature of the findings reported by Stringfield and his colleagues seems to favor Success for All, yet the authors warn that observations of classroom activities across all reforms were discouraging (p. 38). In their observations of classrooms using these reforms, they report that instruction continues to be dominated by management issues; students also have limited or uneven access to subjects other than reading/language arts and mathematics (p. 38). Structural issues, such as scheduling, appear to consume too much staff time and energy and became distractions from the real work of the reforms.

Fashola and Slavin (1998), in a discussion of whole-school reform, point to advantages that whole-school (comprehensive) designs have over self-contained programs. These advantages include the ability to tackle issues of school organization, climate, and policies (p. 14), which would not be possible with a purely programmatic approach.

These authors argue that the greatest potential impact of whole-school designs will be found in Title I schools (in which a minimum of 50 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch) and schools that are awarded Porter-Obey funds to implement comprehensive reform.

Fashola and Slavin report on the results of longitudinal research on Success for All, which was conducted in 23 schools in nine districts throughout the U.S. (p. 17). Success for All schools were matched with comparison schools; students were pretested and individually posttested each year with the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test and the Durrell Oral Reading Test. Results also have been positive, averaging an effect size of approximately +0.50 at each grade level.

Photo, PhotoDisc

In schools serving Hispanic students and using the Spanish-language version of Success for All, results have been positive (Slavin & Madden, 1995; Dianda & Flaherty, 1995). The Slavin and Madden study saw effect sizes at the end of second grade that amounted to almost a full grade equivalent difference, while the Dianda and Flaherty research reports a five-month difference in two California bilingual schools.

As mentioned earlier, CES overall does not generate achievement gains as measured by standardized tests—although such gains are not a goal of the reform. In a study of 11 Chicago schools (Sikorski, Wallace, Stariha, & Rankin, 1993), test scores declined. The lack of a link between standardized tests and what was taught in these schools is a significant limitation, however, on the conclusions of this study.

But studies of CES schools concur that schools struggle to implement the principles of the Coalition. Stringfield et al. (1997), Sikorski et al. (1993), and a longitudinal study conducted by Muncey and McQuillan (1996) did not find reassuring evidence that Coalition principles were evident in schools and classrooms.

Although the Paideia Program has existed the longest of the three reforms, research that clearly documents its success is uneven or inconclusive. Stringfield et al. (1997) looked at two Paideia elementary schools and found neither gains nor dips in reading and math achievement as compared to other schools, but did see attendance fall. A study conducted in Chicago schools using the Paideia Program (Wallace, 1993) found higher attendance and achievement, but the Paideia schools were magnet schools; therefore, it is difficult to determine whether they were equivalent to the comparison schools.

The National Paideia Center has published a "research summary" (1997) that points to early studies with inconclusive results because they focused solely on one aspect of the reform, such as seminars. One study that showed long-term positive results was conducted by Wheelock (1994), who looked at three poorly performing schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She found long-term positive outcomes that included high (90 percent) four-year college attendance rates among graduates from these schools (with an additional five percent attending two-year colleges), a zero dropout rate, and a daily attendance rate at one school that was the highest in the district.

However, a 1995 study by Herman and Stringfield looked at four Paideia schools and found that the flexibility of the program was both beneficial and detrimental (p. 24). Teachers reported an improvement in students' critical thinking and articulation of ideas but test scores did not rise.

In other studies of Paideia schools, overall effects are not apparent, since the studies neglect to address its comprehensive approach to reform. A research team from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is conducting a longitudinal evaluation of the Paideia Program in Guilford County schools, North Carolina. This study, which will be concluded in 2001, will assess the degree to which evaluation goals have been met in these schools. It will also examine the implementation of the reform.

Considerations for School Leaders on Comprehensive Reform

What conclusions might you, the school leader, draw from this summary of key research on these three comprehensive reforms? How might you determine which reform is suited best for your school's needs and your staff? In the following brief discussion, we highlight some of the most critical considerations (For an amplified, practical checklist, please see page 44.)

Philosophy. A good starting point is to examine the existing mission and philosophy of your school, district, and state. This examination, along with an honest appraisal of areas that need improvement, is best conducted by a schoolwide committee that also includes community, parent, and social service organization representatives. This committee needs to keep all school staff informed on a regular basis and actively solicit their input.

Questions worthy of exploration include the broadly philosophical (e.g., Do we believe reform should be locally developed with assistance from an external reform? Do we believe we would benefit from a high degree of structure provided by an externally developed reform?) and the practical (e.g., What timelines do we have to realize positive results? Which reform offers us the greatest likelihood of success? Can we commit adequate resources so that the implementation of the reform will be cohesive throughout the school?).

Level of Schooling. The level of your school (elementary, middle, or high school) adds another dimension to the choice of comprehensive reform. Research indicates that an externally developed reform with a high degree of structure is most effective at the elementary level, but if this approach runs contrary to staff consensus about needed reform, it will not be effective nor will most reforms accept the school as an implementation site.

Commitment of Leadership. What is your own level of commitment to your school? Do you expect to remain in your position for at least three years—long enough to shepherd a reform through the beginning stages, then help it take root and flourish? Are you prepared to advocate for the reform even though initial test scores may be disappointing?

If you are planning to seek another position in the short term, it may not be fair to your school to embark on a massive comprehensive reform. As the summary of research indicates, the quality of implementation affects the effectiveness of a reform. Turnover in leadership is a key variable that affects the success of the implementation.

Commitment of Staff. Assessing the level of staff commitment is a key part of the process of selecting a comprehensive reform. Does the school have a critical mass of staff who will power the reform forward? Are you prepared to counsel resistant staff to "transfer with dignity" to another school if they remain recalcitrant and refuse to embrace the reform? What mechanisms are in place or are planned to support staff through the reform process—both internally and externally?

The Porter-Obey legislation offers a powerful incentive to schools—an almost singular opportunity to improve the quality of schooling for all students, most particularly those at highest risk of academic failure. Instead of consigning these students to dismal, truncated futures, school leaders and staff have within their grasp the potential to transform the face of American education. Clearly, as the United States prepares its youth for future roles as productive citizens and members of the workforce, the choice should not be whether to work diligently to implement a comprehensive reform but rather which reform offers the highest potential for success.

References may be found in the selected bibliography on page 43.

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Photo, David M. Grossman

This time, like all times, is a very good one,
if we but know what to do with it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

13

Conversations With Three Educational Leaders: Comprehensive Reform and Educational Transformation

Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood

What makes a reform comprehensive? What differentiates one comprehensive reform from another? Are there elements that must be present in a reform's design to ensure success? Under what circumstances will schools be able to use a comprehensive reform to trigger enhanced student achievement? What is success—and how should it be evaluated?

We asked these and other questions of three educational leaders well-known for their roles as developers and leaders of three comprehensive reforms: Success for All, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and the Paideia Program. In this section, Robert Slavin (Success for All), Theodore R. Sizer (the Coalition of Essential Schools) and Terry Roberts (the Paideia Program) speak of the reforms with which they have been affiliated and to which they remain committed. In their answers and observations, we see the key differences between the philosophies, designs, and strategies of these programs—and offer them as key information to help guide school leaders in their considerations of comprehensive reform.

Robert Slavin: Success for All

To Robert Slavin, the difference between Success for All and other comprehensive reforms is clearcut and immediately visible—and can be summed up in one word: Specificity.

Other reforms, Slavin says, demand that schools enlist teachers as partners in the reform process—which may be unrealistic or burdensome. "Almost without exception," he points out, "other programs that refer to themselves as comprehensive reforms ask teachers to codevelop the model for their own schools.

"Our approach is quite different. It is very specific, very well worked out. It provides the details that teachers and schools can use to teach the main subjects."

Success for All's training is also much more directive, even prescriptive, Slavin adds. "This doesn't mean the program is identical in all places," he clarifies. "People do add their own innovations and variations within the structure but we do not ask schools to invent their approach to reform. In any school that calls itself a Success for All school, there is a definite core that looks similar."

If specificity is this desirable to school staff seeking both increased student achievement and improved classroom practices, why isn't it found to the same degree in other comprehensive reforms? To Slavin, the answer divides into two realms that are not necessarily related: the ideological and the practical.

"There is an ideological belief," he explains, "that teachers will not take something seriously unless they design it themselves. Proponents of this belief hold that it

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"Once you have finished some part of the development, you have to start over again. You keep learning from the field; the objectives move on; the other conditions change. All of these factors require redevelopment of existing materials."

is disrespectful or disempowering to teachers to ask them to take on a well worked-out design."

Success for All's experiences have been starkly opposite this ideological position. "We find that teachers demand well worked-out materials," Slavin notes. "They want materials that will help them do a better job, rather than having to invent something."

The practical is at least as important as the ideological, Slavin believes—and many reformers are hampered because they want to work immediately with schools but lack appropriate materials and carefully developed training. "To some people involved in reform, being this specific means it is necessary to have a massive program of development to create the specifics," he explains.

"Our experience illustrates this: We have been working on this for 11 years and we are not finished. We work only in elementary schools, whereas many of the New American School programs began K-12 from the outset."

Reform accompanied by specificity presents endless challenges for developers engaged with the model, Slavin says. "Once you have finished some part of the development, you have to start over again. You keep learning from the field; the objectives move on; the other conditions change. All of these factors require redevelopment of existing materials."

Evaluation of ongoing efforts is another key part of Success for All, a focus not necessarily shared by other comprehensive reforms. "Evaluation goes along with specificity," Slavin says. "Developers of models that are codeveloped with teachers would say, perhaps with some justification, that their programs can't be evaluated because they don't know exactly what they are going to become in any given school.

"But in our case, where we expect to measure student achievement gains within a fairly short period of time, we have to be much more specific at the beginning and we have to have a really clear sense of the intervention."

Elements of Comprehensive Reform

How do reformers know which elements need to be included if they do value specificity? Once a program extends beyond a few basic educational principles, what is essential and what can be discarded? How should components of a program be refined as practical experience informs the reform?

Slavin points to his own experience and that of Success for All's other developers as "a wonderful confluence of events." When the Baltimore Public Schools asked the program's developers to pilot Success for All in 1987, the program developers had been immersed in a thorough review of the research on learning strategies, mastery learning, cooperative learning, and other interventions.

"For a long time," Slavin says, "we had looked at effective classroom interventions, effective classroom management interventions, effective assessment strategies, and effective means of dealing with kids who were falling behind. Our principle, from the very outset, was that each component of the overall program was going to be something that had its own evidence of effectiveness."

Stitching together a cohesive whole—each with its own evidence of effectiveness—requires much more than combining items that have been proven effective individually, he cautions. "This process involves considerable judgment, because you have to create something that is coherent—and the pieces need to fit together well. If the pieces are disassembled, you should be able to track back to solid research on each piece—not just the big pieces, but the tiny pieces as well."

To illustrate, Slavin points to different components of the program. "We draw from a big literature on summarization in upper-elementary comprehensive reading strategies. We use direct instruction and reading comprehension strategies. We use forms of cooperative learning that have been very well-documented. We have kids do partner reading, taking turns reading to each other, because the notion of repeated oral reading has a long-standing tradition. In the writing program we use a form of writing process that has its own evidence of effectiveness."

Over time, these strategies and elements are refined, Slavin adds. "We continue to look at the literature, but more importantly, we learn from the teachers and from our own experience in working with the schools using the program. It goes without saying that once you are out in the field you have to know that what you are doing is conceptually sensible, but it is almost more important to see what can be implemented, what works well with teachers, what kids resonate to.

"We do have to deal with reality," Slavin notes, "in terms of the number of minutes in the school day, certain limitations on cost, and other sorts of issues."

Refinement and Continuous Improvement

How are refinements and changes introduced into a comprehensive reform? Are there concrete strategies to use with school staff who may have become accustomed to using the program in an earlier format?

Slavin compares changes and refinements in reform to those experienced by software developers. "They produce a version 3 and then 3.2 and then move to something totally different called version 4. We go through that same kind of pilot testing to larger-scale testing to dissemination to refinement of each of the major components of the model over a period of time. This keeps us current."

There is an additional benefit, he claims. "This refinement keeps schools feeling that they are part of a living program, not wound up and set to go forever without changes."

As part of its ongoing refinement, Success for All places considerable emphasis on its annual conferences for experienced schools. "When we negotiate fees," Slavin says, "we build in registration fees for two people from each school to attend these conferences. Because of the number of participating schools, we have to hold them in more than one city. But we have many, many sessions which introduce new materials. We have sessions where experienced principals can get together and share ideas. We have mechanisms for people to highlight the innovations they are coming up with because we want to give schools the opportunity to share that with each other. There is a very important networking process that we try to further through these national conferences and also through the development of local support networks."

He adds, "These networking opportunities are often more important than anything else after people have the basics up and running and are refining the program."

Relentlessness and Reform

Throughout Success for All's literature, the word "relentlessness" crops up as a trait necessary for school staff engaged in comprehensive reform. What are the roots of the need for relentlessness? Why is it a part of the program—and why is it so imperative?

To Slavin, the need for relentlessness is made apparent by the fact that rhetoric about high expectations all too frequently does not penetrate into daily practice. "Everybody talks about high expectations," he says, "but we don't really have high expectations if we say we have done well enough and that is the most we can do. Instead, relentlessness focuses on building a structure that gives continual feedback on the performance of children in a variety of ways. It inculcates the belief that all children really can learn.

"If you put those two things together," he continues, "you almost have to be relentless. You see kids slipping behind and you can't say: Well, that is how things go. You have to take action and that is the whole purpose of the Success for All program."

Rather than accepting less than optimal results, school staff who are relentless instead acknowledge progress but also take into account what has not been achieved. As an example, Slavin relates the story of a Success for All family support coordinator at a Texas school who labored to get eyeglasses for a boy who broke his early in the year.

"The mother was very difficult to track down," he recollects, "and wouldn't come to the school for meetings. The child was slipping behind day after day because he couldn't read what was in front of him."

The family support coordinator finally found the mother at her place of employment, a hotel where she worked as a maid. "She talked to the mother and resolved the problem. The child got eyeglasses and has done extremely well ever since."

This story, Slavin contends, illustrates the quality of relentlessness necessary to carry reform to its highest potential.

"Clearly, this family support coordinator is an extraordinary individual. Instead of seeing this problem as business as usual, she went out and found a way to resolve it. The parent was so impressed by her efforts that her own interaction with the school changed dramatically."

In order for this dogged approach to succeed, the proper staffing needs to be in place, Slavin points out—and it has to become the schoolwide norm that a child who is falling behind will not be allowed to continue on a downward path.

Is it realistic to expect relentlessness from each teacher and staff member, or does this characteristic depend on personality and temperament? Or does a wave of staff support in a school sweep the recalcitrant or reluctant teachers along with it?

Slavin points to school leadership as a key variable, along with the power of staff commitment. "A principal and/or facilitator who are good cheerleaders for this kind of approach have a big impact on the tone in the school," he says adamantly. "They clearly affect the overall attitude about whether all children really can learn and what kinds of efforts are going to be considered normal."

What is the particular role of the principal? Is it necessary to be a hands-on leader when enacting Success for All, or can a principal be an interested observer but not necessarily the most active participant?

According to Slavin, there is a range of productive leadership behaviors. "There are principals who rely on their facilitator," he says, "and their schools run very well because they have a particularly able person in that role. There are principals who do take a much more active leadership role and establish the tone for the rest of the school.

"However, it is very bad for the school," he emphasizes, "if the principal takes a role that says the program is everyone else's responsibility. But the program has a certain amount of planned redundancy built into it so that if one person isn't fantastic, the whole program won't become disabled."

Slavin has considerable empathy for the leadership challenges faced by principals in high-needs schools. "Principals in these schools work 14 hours a day just to keep things going. They aren't necessarily involved in instructional leadership. Having both the principal and the facilitator enables the principal to set the tone for the school, which is critical. The facilitator can deal with the nuts and bolts of the program, observe teachers at work, and give them feedback on what they are doing. This is especially important for new teachers or for the teachers who are having difficulty in one way or another."

Facilitators also play a key role in examining the eight-week assessment data used to determine the progress of students. "No principal can do all of this," he insists, "because it is too much. They have to deal with the structure of the school, the custodians, the buses, the outraged parents, and many other urgent daily issues."

However, a potential problem can occur if the roles of principal and facilitator are blurred, Slavin says. "One recurrent difficulty happens if the principal pulls the facilitator off the tasks that we require and has him or her do all sorts of other things. Many principals will load responsibilities on these very hard-working, capable people and that will disable their roles as facilitators for the program. This is a problem we wrestle with continuously."

Program Specifications and Roles

The specificity of Success for All can create its own tensions in a school, Slavin acknowledges—particularly when the program mandates finite periods of time for different areas of instruction. Why is it so important that teachers adhere faithfully to the timelines set up by the program?

To Slavin, the answer is practical and results oriented. "If people don't focus on the amount of time that goes into what they are doing, then things never get done," he observes pragmatically.

"We use a 90-minute period for reading and we pack a massive amount into those 90 minutes. In the first months of the program, about 90 percent of the teachers will tell us it can't be done. We then take them to see a school that is a year farther along in the program and they see that it can be done. But doing it demands a close watch on the clock."

As teachers become more accustomed to the demands of the program, they become more comfortable operating under its structure, he points out. "They don't need to pay attention to the time in the same way," he says. "If they are making terrific progress at something, then they have more flexibility. But at the outset we stay on a schedule to make sure that 15-minute activities don't end up taking 30 minutes."

Experience informs these choices, he asserts. "We have experimented with these things in all different ways," he adds, "and we have seen what happens when people are not serious about the time element."

The constraints of time and coverage are only one portion of a much larger problem, Slavin says—a need for flexibility within tight parameters. "The issue is maintaining enough consistency in quality so that the kids aren't short-changed,

The constraints of time and coverage are only one portion of a much larger problem, —a need for flexibility within tight parameters. "The issue is maintaining enough consistency in quality so that the kids aren't short-changed, but also allowing for creativity and individual adaptations so that they can feel good about what they're doing. We don't want people to feel they are punching a clock."

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One of the program's main objectives is to establish a common set of procedures and a shared language in a school that do not waver, Slavin says. "Teachers will say: I have a better procedure for that. Quite often, they are probably right. But first it is important to establish the common procedures and then have the teachers do whatever they think they can do better."

He has a significant caveat, however. "Whatever the teacher thinks can be done better should be done not because the teacher is resisting change or is afraid of change. It should be done because there is a good rationale for including it."

Creativity can be an excuse, Slavin argues, that interferes with reform. "Often teachers will say they want to be creative, which means they don't want to change. They want to continue to do whatever they were doing and they want to be left alone. We think it is fine for them to do things their own way—but first they have to try the other way. If they make a real effort, they will make a choice between two things that they can do."

It is a constant source of tension, a dilemma that never ends, he suggests. "As a reformer, you want something that will work with the worst teachers in the school, that will not allow them to continue horrible teaching practices. At the same time, you don't want to inhibit the best teachers in the school. Getting that right is very difficult. We keep in mind the lowest-performing kid in the school who has the worst teacher in the building. That child has to succeed in reading. That is our commitment. This will not happen if all the teachers do a great job except for Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith has to do a great job, too.

"Obviously," he continues, "you can get rid of the most incompetent teachers over time, but right now Ms. Smith is the teacher for this classroom. Given that, her students have to do the best job they possibly can. That often requires more structure and more consistency than is necessary from a different teacher."

Assessing Progress

As Success for All developers assess progress, do they seek particular patterns in test scores? What sorts of gains are appropriate? At what point is there cause for alarm?

"We see different patterns for individual administered standardized tests that we give than we do for group-administered standardized tests," Slavin responds. "Individually administered tests are much more sensitive to students' actual reading and comprehension in the early grades than the group-administered standardized tests."

State standardized tests often aren't administered until third or fourth grade, which means gains aren't seen until that year—and students who have fallen behind also are relatively invisible until it becomes more difficult to intervene appropriately. "Typically, using our individually administered standardized tests, at the end of the first year we see a substantial gain compared to the control groups. At the end of the second year at the same school there will be a larger difference between experimental and control groups."

Each successive group of first graders will achieve at higher levels in individually administrated standardized tests, Slavin says, although longer-term there may be a drop-off in scores that can be explained by a corresponding decline in the quality of implementation. "Often after the fourth, fifth, or sixth year something happens," he points out.

"If a program depends on having a principal or superintendent long-term, that is not reality. Mechanisms need to be in place that anticipate and survive external threats. A great majority of schools that we work with stay with the program for many years."

"The superintendent changes, the principal is gone, the facilitator has changed three times. Various things undermine the support in the district or school and the quality of the implementation then begins to erode."

Concern about maintaining the integrity of the program over time has driven Success for All's developers to try to build in plans for long-term maintenance, he adds. "If a program depends on having a principal or superintendent long-term, that is not reality," he asserts. "Mechanisms need to be in place that anticipate and survive external threats. A great majority of schools that we work with stay with the program for many years."

School Leaders and Comprehensive Reform

Since school leaders change jobs frequently and the course of reform can suffer as a result, what should they consider before embarking upon a particular comprehensive reform? Are there guiding principles they would be wise to follow?

Slavin has concrete advice, including the need to research thoroughly whatever program the school or district selects. "I would look broadly," he says, "not accept the first thing that comes along.

"I would also involve a committee of parents and teachers—including some who really doubt the potential of the reform to effect change. This committee should conduct a very thorough investigation of programs that are available and send delegations on school visits."

He cautions, "This is a big choice. We are talking about the life of people in schools. This is not the same thing as trying out a science program. Comprehensive reform becomes one's life."

Slavin admits that on occasion he has been surprised by schools' naivete about the reform process—and their willingness to enter into a long, serious, and expensive process without adequate background research. "We require an 80 percent vote before we will work with a school," he says. "It is necessary to have the entire school staff not only vote but understand what they are entering into.

"A principal has a particular role," he suggests, "that pushes staff into realizing that the performance they are getting from students isn't good enough and that a decision is necessary to change that performance. It is highly appropriate for the principal to tell his or her staff that something has to be done, although the principal will not dictate the choice."

Instead, Slavin says, the principal facilitates the exploration to discover which comprehensive reform fits the school's needs, philosophy, resources, and capacities. "Whatever is chosen," he adds, "is something the school needs to be committed to in the implementation so that nothing will interfere with its quality."

What period of time is realistic for the research and school visits? Can the decisionmaking process be either too brief or too lengthy?

"Begin in the winter for the following fall," he answers immediately. "People often err in the other direction and wait too long. When a school is ready for change, it can begin in September after an exploration and decisionmaking period in the preceding winter. We have learned that it is important to begin when the enthusiasm is the greatest, the people who brought in the program are still there, the money is there, and the concerted effort is present.

"If the planning process is too long," he concludes with a note of warning, "by the time a reform reaches the classrooms everybody has forgotten about it. The energy, the belief, and the resources have dissipated.

"Frequently, people already have tried many things that didn't work, particularly in difficult inner-city schools," he emphasizes. "It is necessary to convince them that this is different, so people need to perceive that their students are reading better than they ever have before. By Thanksgiving or Christmas at the latest, they must see this, because otherwise there will be a slide in the quality of the implementation."

Photo. PhotoDisc

Knowing is not enough; we must apply.
Willing is not enough; we must do.

Goethe

Theodore R. Sizer: The Coalition of Essential Schools

Local circumstances and local cultures, Ted Sizer maintains, are the powerful wellsprings for lasting school reform—and are the source from which the Coalition of Essential Schools draws its strength. "Our work at the Coalition," he begins, "is driven by commonly held ideas, but it assumes the local crafting of those ideas in ways that both engage the people in a school and also reflect the culture that is the foundation of the school."

High school reform, the emphasis of the Coalition, is also a two-step process, he adds—primarily because of the structure of secondary schools. "Many reform efforts, typically at the elementary level," Sizer notes, "work in self-contained classrooms and can go immediately to pedagogy. High schools don't have that luxury."

"For that reason," he continues, "the first step is to rethink how the school is designed and then rearrange the design to make possible better work.

"That," he emphasizes, "is brutally difficult."

The second step is to shape teaching practices that make it possible for all students to use their minds well. "Having gotten a more persuasive vessel in which to pursue teaching," Sizer says, "the second step is pursuing it so that kids learn."

Reform and History

The Coalition of Essential Schools is marked by its longevity on the American educational landscape and its dedication, in particular, to changing secondary education. Looking historically over its evolution, what major lessons have been learned about the pace and progress of reform? Have any experiences been particularly surprising?

"As a historian," Sizer observes, "I've seen a lot of wrecked ships in the past, so I shouldn't have been surprised by the difficulty of the work. The chief difficulty is getting people, including myself, to think differently about learning, schooling, and kids."

Although blunt evidence can be compelling, it can be almost impossible to accept, he points out. "People realize that kids develop intellectually as well as physiologically at different rates. Therefore, they can't be treated all the same. This is obvious.

"But when that means that age grading has to be dramatically changed in the academic program of the school, the off switch is selected," he notes. "People simply can't visualize a school that doesn't have a ninth grade."

Not only is the work of reform difficult politically, but it involves a more complex and subtle intellectual shift. "Politically, you are laboring to change well-established structures," Sizer points out. "An intellectual shift is, of course, considerably more difficult to bring about than structural changes."

But as grueling as those changes are to accomplish, Sizer admits that he was taken aback to encounter the pervasive instability of the entire educational system—which makes continuous reform exponentially more difficult. "We see the coming and going of superintendents," he points out, "the vagaries of regulatory policy, the impatience of the policy and business communities. If you can't accomplish something in three years, somebody else will probably take over."

Finally, Sizer points to the biggest discovery: His realization that there are two reform movements under way in schooling—parallel and separate, each with its own momentum and rationale. "One reform movement is the visible, the systemic, the state frameworks, charter schools, and changes in regulation," he says.

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"The other is a grassroots movement, which involves school people and some of their supporters getting on with what they think is best for the kids in their charge. It is a type of respectful disobedience."

These two reform movements have little to no impact on each other, he adds. "They almost deliberately and quietly pass each other in the middle of the night. We see this type of grassroots reform in District Four in New York City. Its leaders didn't depend on the larger system. They have gone through eight chancellors since they started.

"Instead," he continues, "their movement depended on people who decided to do something, to move on sensible reforms. I have great respect for this type of movement," he continues.

"It is full of extraordinary people who are determined to do whatever they think is right whatever the current policy world says."

Grassroots Reform

Why is the grassroots approach to reform so necessary? Why is it so imperative not to impose structures, curriculum, materials, and assessment upon a school or district? Is the Coalition's approach purely philosophical, or are there practical considerations that support this belief?

Sizer points again to the local context. "Wise conditions that one obtained at a school in rural New Mexico will be different than those for Scarsdale High School in New York. They are both good places with decent people in them, but one size does not fit all in this country."

How reform will be sustained is especially critical, he argues. "There is an old aphorism: Give a fish to a hungry man to eat and he quickly will be hungry again. Make it possible for him to learn how to be a fisherman and he will never be hungry again. The extent to which the reform effort builds the capacity of people who know their communities and can build upon that knowledge are reforms that will have deep roots."

The history, he adds, of externally imposed reforms is not encouraging. "We saw many carefully orchestrated imposed reforms in the Sixties," Sizer recalls. "Few left much of a trace even though they had massive, high-visibility backing and a lot of money. They didn't succeed long-term because they never belonged to anybody. They were well-intentioned, but they lacked the authenticity that comes from the constant refashioning of education in the hands of very good people who know their communities."

The biggest question raised by prescriptive reforms, Sizer adds, is whether they can be sustained. "If successful education is measured in what is displayed in standardized tests," he says, "if you control the nature of those tests, and if you create a rigid but very thoughtful pedagogy preparing kids to take those tests, a reform can be successful in the short term.

"However, if we look back to reforms such as mastery learning, or if we remember that very ugly phrase of the Sixties, 'teacher-proof materials,' we see that these reforms have no staying power. We must have reform that can endure. It is not the consultants who will drive change; it is the people in the schools."

While reform can succeed with a variety of approaches, Sizer insists that the doggedly persistent will succeed. "As a historian," he notes, "I believe the tortoise will win the race. The tortoise is represented by an army of school people who have been persuaded that there is a different way of looking at their work and that they have to fashion this work in new ways."

Reforming High Schools

Since the Coalition's work has focused on high schools—long considered the most resistant to reform—what has been particularly encouraging about its progress? Are there signs that secondary schools are opening themselves to new structures and classroom practices?

Sizer remains hopeful that high schools can transform themselves, but he is a realist about the gap between rhetoric and practice. "If the language has changed, does the practice change?" he asks. "It hasn't changed to a significant degree, not yet. Changing the structures alone may not change student performance."

He points to many schools that have embraced block scheduling but see it as the end point, not a lever with which to effect other changes. "Instead of 45 minutes of lectures," he says, "we have 90 minutes of lectures. Maybe the scheduling change is a necessary step, but it is only a first step."

As high schools work to change their structures—and then struggle with the quality of intellectual life in the school—to what extent might they become locked into their deliberations over structures and not be able to move forward with the real life of the school? Can reform or restructuring become a diversion from effecting significant change?

"The fights over structure," Sizer responds, "may be so fierce that it is never possible to get beyond changing the way the institution functions and on to how that new structure might be used on behalf of kids."

But school leaders, he believes, can intervene to keep reform lively and sustained in its focus. "Principals can depoliticize a battle over structural changes," Sizer maintains, "by conducting an endless public review of students' real work. They can look at randomly collected samples of student work and have a discussion about the quality of that work, not about the particular kids, not about whether they came out of 90-minute blocks."

The Coalition has found this approach helpful not only to sharpen a sense of where the problems in a school are located, but also to depoliticize ongoing debates about reform. "Most people will agree," Sizer says, "when looking at randomly collected samples of student work, that it is not good enough. This is a very humbling experience, particularly if the kids have very high scores on SATs. It brings about the realization that the school's problems are deeper and more complicated than people thought."

He adds, "In that honest recognition is the beginning of wisdom."

The Role of Teacher Education

Since the Coalition exhorts teachers and students to develop proper habits of mind, teachers need to approach their work with the intellectual fortitude and pragmatism that will equip them to survive. Yet many teacher education programs continue to be indicted publicly for their failure to prepare adequately a teacher workforce that can engage thoughtfully and deeply in reform. Under these circumstances, what characteristics do preservice programs need to possess in order to prepare a workforce capable of the type of intellectual inquiry that the Coalition advocates?

"The first issue," Sizer asserts, "is attracting first-class people into teaching and retaining them. The most important way to do this is to change the way high schools work. Very few of us can sustain in our souls the compromises required by teaching 170 kids at once. It is corrosive. We either won't do it very long, or we will become cynical and do it for the cash."

The Coalition's experience in dramatically redesigned schools has had dramatic implications for the teacher workforce, he notes. "These redesigned schools serve as magnets to those people who want to be career teachers but also want to work where they have a fighting chance of doing a better job."

Teacher education, Sizer says, begins with a definition of what a teacher is and the conditions under which he or she works. But university teacher education programs at the secondary level are sharply stratified by content—preparing prospective teachers for exactly the same stratification in high schools.

"University instruction and certification," Sizer points out, "is sharply divided along subject matter lines—and the contacts across those lines are very limited.

"In addition, most student teaching is done in well-intentioned but dysfunctional schools. It is like training doctors in well-intentioned but dysfunctional hospitals. It simply doesn't make sense."

For that reason, teacher education programs need to exert their influence upon schools and act as an additional force that prods change. "Few teacher education programs are prepared to change the way they work, to use their political power and money to support thoughtfully redesigned schools, which is the first step," Sizer points out.

"The second step is to gather their student teachers in with the veterans, so that together they can puzzle out how to rethink the structures of the school."

Surprisingly, Sizer does not believe that high school teachers are exclusively interested in communicating their content area and considerably less interested in the broad picture of reform.

"I don't know many teachers who just want to teach history," he says. "Even the stereotypical old-timer is in school work, which is difficult and poorly paid, because he is interested in kids' broad lives. Such a teacher may be stubborn and suspicious of other departments, but my experience both as a principal and in the Coalition has been that there is much more give in the system than the conventional wisdom would indicate. Even the most grizzled veteran knows there is a problem with kids' academic work broadly defined."

He cautions against making judgments about a school or its staff based on a brief visit. "That is the equivalent," he says dryly, "of sizing up the quality of a family by having Sunday lunch."

The Pressures of Standardized Tests

Given the existence of two parallel, but not connected reform movements—one policy driven and the other springing from the grass roots—what tension exists between the assessments valued by the Coalition and standardized tests? To what extent are problems related to assessment a significant barrier to the type of reform embraced by the Coalition?

"It is a very serious problem," Sizer says thoughtfully. "I experienced it as a high school principal in the 1970s. Many

of our kids came from working-class homes and needed to get high scores on the SATs and Advanced Placement exams. Some of my colleagues who knew those tests well believed that some of these assessments were at best detached from serious work, and at worst emphasized 'test-taking' skills rather than serious scholarship. It reduced the curriculum to only that which lent itself to the particular testing style."

While students need to score well to get scholarships to the colleges of their choice, this requirement places additional pressure on school staff who may be torn between what they see as significant and what they view as trivial. "My experience at Phillips Academy and also currently around the country," Sizer explains, "is that there is one track that prepares kids for the tests and there is a second track that prepares them to be scholars. Those tracks are often very different."

He is troubled by the lack of evidence that high scores on SATs or AP exams lead to future success. "Putting aside the extremes, there is very little evidence that those scores are good predictors. If all this massive testing only correlates with other test scores and doesn't correlate with the quality of the kid's mind, and his habit of using it well, then I doubt their efficacy."

But policymakers' current emphasis on test scores renews and invigorates the tension, he believes. "We are in a moment like we were in the early 1920s," he says, "when we believed that high test scores and serious education were the same thing. High-quality work, particularly in high school, involves a much more complicated form of assessment that measures deep understanding. Not many tests measure that in a significant way or encourage schools to teach in that way. As a historian, I know this too shall pass, but it isn't pleasant living through it."

Evaluating the Coalition's Success

As someone deeply committed to education reform, how does Sizer gauge the success of the Coalition? What is success—and how should it be measured?

In his answer, Sizer points again to the difficulty of enacting long-lasting change. "I am sober about success because the work is so hard," he says. "Only a minority of schools have been able to pull off what their most thoughtful faculty and community leaders want. That is disappointing, but not surprising, because often what these schools want is so different from the conventional wisdom. Getting support is a slow, difficult process."

But he remains optimistic. "I am increasingly encouraged," he reports, "from what I hear anecdotally, and in one case, for example, from careful research about the lives of kids after graduating from Coalition schools."

A longitudinal study of the Central Park East schools in New York City followed graduates into their mid-20s. "When comparing these students, who were low income and of color, with their peers in other schools, the difference is staggering. The overwhelming majority went to college and succeeded. They graduated from college and are doing important work now."

Tracking differences with low-income students is easier than with their more affluent counterparts, Sizer maintains. "If you are rich, the gradations are going to be narrow, because even if you are poorly schooled you can get into a prominent college and get a good job."

Seeing significant differences in the lives of students who have reached maturity and are engaged in their lifework sustains Sizer. "I remain buoyed by this and other reports," he concludes. "We must remember that where we see the effects is where education has to count. That is going to be a major, major consideration for the future."

"We are in a moment like we were in the early 1920s when we believed that high test scores and serious education were the same thing. High-quality work, particularly in high school, involves a much more complicated form of assessment that measures deep understanding. Not many tests measure that in a significant way or encourage schools to teach in that way.

Photo, David M. Grossman

An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.

Benjamin Franklin

FAQ: Comprehensive School Reform

What is comprehensive school reform?

Comprehensive school reform (CSR) focuses on reorganizing and revitalizing entire schools, rather than on implementing isolated reforms. It uses well-researched and well-documented models for schoolwide change that are supported by expert trainers and facilitators. Challenging academic standards, strong professional development, and meaningful parent and community involvement are all part of most comprehensive school reform models.

What is the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program?

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (CSRDp) is part of the 1997 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Act. Sponsored by Congressmen Obey (WI) and Porter (IL), the CSRDp provides funding to help schools adopt successful comprehensive school reform models.

The program makes $145 million available to state education agencies to provide competitive incentive grants to school districts for schools that pursue comprehensive reform. Of these funds, $120 million is earmarked for Title I schools; the remaining $25 million can go to any school under the Fund for the Improvement of Education. Up to 3,000 schools may be eligible for grants of at least $50,000 (renewable for two years). This money will be available on July 1, 1998, to states submitting applications. Funds will be allocated to states using the same formula as Title I.

State	*1998 Appropriation*
Illinois	$6,320,078
Indiana	$2,400,357
Iowa	$1,096,176
Michigan	$6,199,618
Minnesota	$1,923,348
Ohio	$5,884,233
Wisconsin	$2,607,035

The program also provides $4 million for the regional educational laboratories to help schools select, design, implement, and evaluate comprehensive school reforms. (NCREL received $500,000 to assist schools in the Midwest.) In addition, the U.S. Department of Education received $1 million to disseminate proven comprehensive school reform models.

What is the purpose of CSRDp?

The purpose of the program is to provide a minimum of $50,000 per school to "jump-start" the implementation of research-based, comprehensive school reform models. The legislation identifies 17 models, but also adds that schools can adopt other home-grown, research-based comprehensive models.

Comprehensive School Reform Models

- Accelerated Schools
- America's Choice
- ATLAS Communities
- Audrey Cohen College
- Coalition of Essential Schools
- Community for Learning
- Co-NECT
- Direct Instruction
- Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound
- High Schools That Work
- Modern Red Schoolhouse
- Paideia
- Roots and Wings
- School Development Program
- Success for All
- Talent Development High School
- Urban Learning Center

How does a school or district apply for CSRDp funds?

Earlier this spring, the Department of Education released an RFP inviting states to apply for funding under this program. The states were required to submit proposals describing how they will announce the program, identify who is eligible, review applications and select recipients, and evaluate the success of the initiative. Other considerations include how many schools in a district can or must apply, how and when dollars will be distributed, whether the districts or schools must guarantee matching funds, and which models will be acceptable.

Beginning this spring, the Department of Education will review state applications on a rolling basis. Once approved, the states will release their own RFPs to districts, outlining the application process and criteria for review and selection. Schools and districts must work together to apply for these funds. Applications must be submitted by the district on behalf of a school or group of schools. Application deadlines will be determined by the states.

Is comprehensive school reform a good choice for my school?

To determine if your school is ready to implement a comprehensive school reform program, first define your school's goals and objectives, identify critical needs areas, and assess the ability of your staff and school community to support such an effort.

Some questions to ask yourself include:

- Does your school have clearly articulated goals for student learning, teacher effectiveness, community involvement, and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment across grade levels and content areas?
- How much flexibility does your school have in terms of budgeting, scheduling, and providing opportunities for professional development?
- How ready to participate in and support change are the members of your school community (e.g., administrators, teachers, and parents)?
- How experienced is your staff in teaming for planning, implementing, and evaluating site-based reform?

Use the checklist in this issue of *New Leaders for Tomorrow's Schools* to help determine if comprehensive school reform is a good choice for your school.

How do we select a comprehensive school reform model?

The process of choosing a comprehensive school reform model that is right for your school has several stages.

Step One: Examine basic information about the comprehensive school reform models to determine which models fit your school's priorities and capacities. Ask the following questions:

- How well does the program align with your school's improvement goals? Does it address your school's critical needs? Does it align with district and state improvement goals?
- How much is required to implement the program in terms of resources such as time, equipment, and dollars?
- How much flexibility from district and state regulations does the school need to implement the program successfully?
- What are the professional development requirements?
- To what degree would your school's stakeholders have to support the program?
- What technical assistance is provided? How much of that is on site?
- How much development is required by school staff (e.g., curriculum and instructional materials)?

For a general overview of the CSR models identified in the Obey-Porter legislation, visit NCREL's CSR Web site (www.ncrel.org/csri/) or call the NCREL Resource Center at (800) 356-2735.

Turn to page 44 for a Comprehensive School Reform Planning Tool

Step Two: Select several CSR models for closer investigation. We recommend that you have a team (possibly your school improvement team) review information about the selected models and report back to the entire staff. Decisions should be based on what you know about your own school as well as what you learn about the programs. Some issues to consider include:

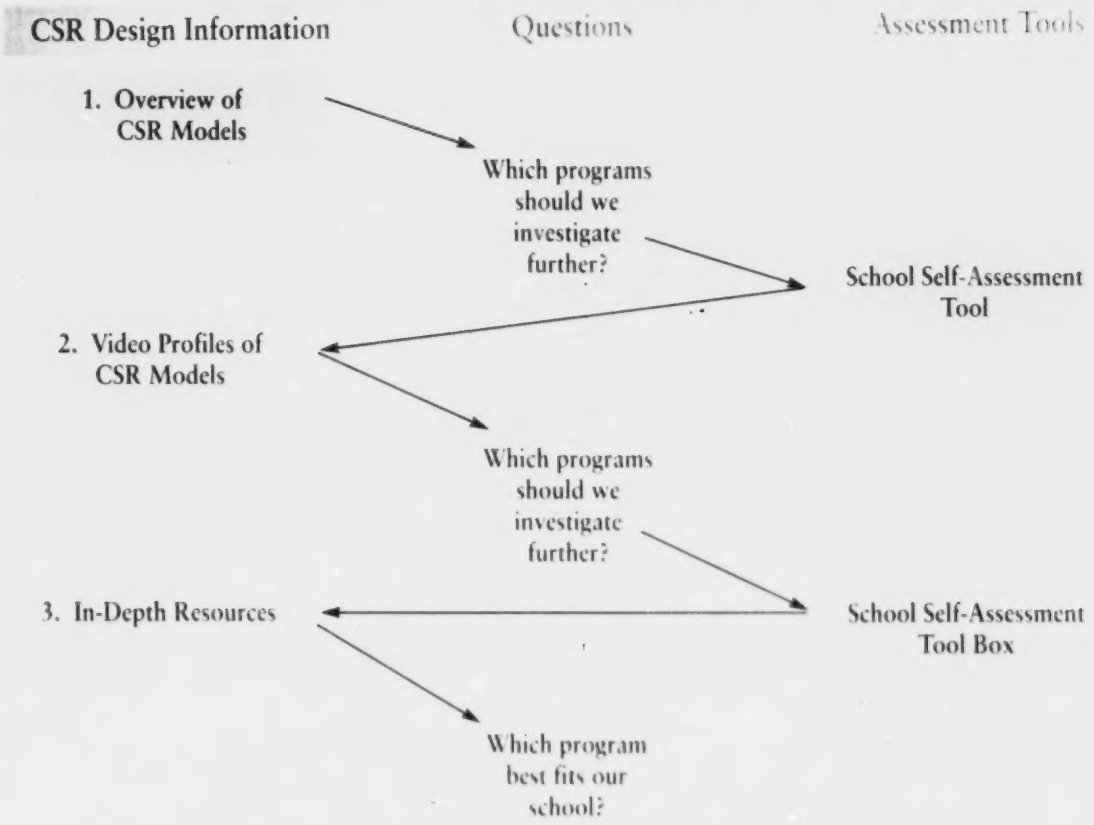
- Design type (e.g., core, comprehensive, or systemic)
- Approaches to curriculum and instruction
- Professional development components
- Changes to school- or district-level governance
- Staffing and organization implications
- Parent and community involvement
- Provisions for integrated services

For video profiles of the comprehensive school reform models, contact NCREL's Order Department at (800) 356-2735.

Step Three: Once you have narrowed your decision to two or three models, we recommend that you visit schools like yours that have successfully implemented these programs. If you are unable to visit the schools in person, interview staff members at those sites by telephone.

For a list of some of the schools and districts in the Midwest that are implementing CSR programs, contact NCREL's Resource Center at (800) 356-2735.

Selecting a Comprehensive School Reform Model


CSR Design Information
Questions
Assessment Tools
1. Overview of CSR Models
Which programs should we investigate further?
School Self-Assessment Tool
2. Video Profiles of CSR Models
Which programs should we investigate further?
3. In-Depth Resources
School Self-Assessment Tool Box
Which program best fits our school?

What assistance does NCREL offer?

NCREL has developed a number of resources and tools to help you determine if comprehensive school reform is right for your school or district and to help you select a CSR model. These resources include:

- The CSR Initiative Web site (www.ncrel.org/csri/), with links to the CSR model developers' Web sites, state contacts and information, and much more
- A Comprehensive School Reform Initiative Fact Sheet
- An Overview of Comprehensive School Reform Models
- A Video Overview of the 17 reform models (2 tapes)
- Ninety-minute Video Profiles of each of the reform models
- The School Self-Assessment Tool
- A List of CSR Sites in the North Central Region
- A Captured Wisdom™ CD-ROM (in development)

How do I get more information?

Contact us at:

Comprehensive School Reform Initiative
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, Illinois 60523-1480
(800) 356-2735, Fax (630) 571-4716

Or visit NCREL's CSR Web site at:
www.ncrel.org/csri/

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Terry Roberts: The Paideia Program

The process of school reform, says Terry Roberts, resembles the process of sausage-making: It's not pretty, but the product is enjoyable. "We enjoy seeing the model school," he asserts, "where the teachers love their principal, kids are doing well, and good things are happening in classrooms."

In a tone of wry realism, he adds, "What visitors don't see are the two to three years of difficult effort that got the school to that point. No matter what reform is chosen by a school or district, it will fail if we don't produce a dramatic improvement in teacher behavior across the board in how we teach all subject areas and work with students."

A deliberate, mindful spotlight on the classroom—particularly the relationship between teacher and student—distinguishes the Paideia Program from other comprehensive reforms, Roberts adds. This relationship, which places seminars at the heart of changes in classroom practice, is the essence of Paideia, he maintains—and focuses critical scrutiny on the quality of classroom teaching and how it might improve.

"The first thing we want to change," Roberts says, "is classroom teaching. We want to raise its quality, and then we want to protect that quality. In our program, we ask: How can we put the best possible teaching in every classroom in the building?"

Everything else flows from that question, he says—whether it is governance, scheduling, community relations, or assessment. The first year that the Paideia program works with a school, seminars become the essence of all training.

How much structure is appropriate? What do teachers need from a reform? Do the difficulties of changing classroom practice to accommodate a focus on seminars—something usually new to teachers—present significant impediments?

Essential Tension

Roberts points to an essential tension between too much structure and not enough. "Frequently, teachers ask for more curriculum structure than we actually provide," he says.

"In a typical school, we conduct seminar training the first year. Often the school will require that every teacher do a seminar on a given text on a specific day at a specific time—in order to give them support and so they gain experience. In addition to that, the school governance team might also tell the faculty that they expect teachers to do five additional seminars on their own. These seminars might be on a short story in English class, on a map in history class, or on The Lives of a Cell by Lewis Thomas in a biology class."

The Paideia Center also works to establish a peer coaching support process, Roberts adds, in which teachers observe each other's classrooms. "We as the outside support," he explains, "go in as critical friends, do model lessons, team-teach with teachers, watch them teach, and coach them where appropriate."

However, he is wary of excessive dependence on outside gurus. "We want to wean teachers from needing us to help them align their instructional techniques with their curriculum."

All of these good intentions aside, teachers still crave specificity in curriculum, he observes—sometimes to the chagrin of Paideia developers and trainers. "Out of perhaps 65 teachers, 15 to 20 will tell us: 'We like what you do. You are helping us. But we want you to send us your sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade curriculum. We want a list of seminars with questions.'"

This specificity doesn't exist in the Paideia Program, Roberts adds—and, in fact, is antithetical to its purpose. "It also is logistically impossible," he insists. "Even if we wanted to, we couldn't provide a cur-

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Terry Roberts is Director of the National Paideia Center and Assistant Clinical Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A former high school English teacher, he previously was Associate Director of the National Paideia Center and prior to that, Assistant Program Director for the Principals' Executive Program of the University of North Carolina's Institute of Government. The author of many articles, he is also author and coauthor of two books: The Power of Paideia Schools: Lives Defined Through Learning *(ASCD, forthcoming) and (with Laura Billings)* The Paideia Classroom *(forthcoming).*

"No matter what reform is chosen by a school or district, it will fail if we don't produce a dramatic improvement in teacher behavior across the board in how we teach all subject areas and work with students."

riculum that is aligned with the standard course of study in the different states in which we work.

"And philosophically, it is incongruent with what we think of the teacher's role. We see the teacher as a model in every classroom, someone who adapts the curriculum to the needs of the students, someone who can change the thrust of seminars to accommodate a new class."

This is not to say that teachers don't receive considerable support as they learn to conduct seminars. "We show them how to align seminar instruction with their curricular goals," Roberts says, "and teach them how to write good seminar questions so that teaching in this way isn't overly laborious. It is labor-intensive in the beginning, but we hope that eventually it doesn't take teachers longer to prepare a seminar than it does to plan any good lesson. The rewards are seen in the actual instruction, which is much more powerful."

Another reason the Paideia Program does not provide teachers with the specificity they frequently seek, Roberts adds, is that the program facilitators want teachers to discover the text for themselves and enter the inquiry process along with their students.

Conducting Socratic Seminars

While learning how to conduct Paideia seminars—one of the essential components of the Paideia Program—can be difficult, the fact that the seminars are constrained to finite time periods is reassuring for neophytes. Roberts says, "These seminars are the biggest stretch for teachers because they are unlike what they do already. Teachers will tell us they have classroom discussions, but we question them. We ask: Is your discussion designed to get kids to talk to each other and not to you? Is it designed to get kids to think, develop, construct, and articulate their own ideas as opposed to yours or the authors of the textbook? How open-ended are your questions?"

Teachers begin to see that previous practice is not necessarily synonymous with the seminar format of open-ended questions and dialogue. "But because these seminars take place within a class period, it is much easier for teachers to think of them as a separate instructional entity. It is also easier for us to coach them as they learn to lead."

In the second year of Paideia implementation, teachers begin to rethink all instructional units through coached projects. "These units take two to three weeks and are more difficult," Roberts explains. "Teachers will ask us to do a model coached lesson. We can, but we only model one-tenth of the process in a single day or period. While these projects are closer to what teachers already do, if they don't grasp conceptually what the projects are about, the teachers are more difficult for us to coach."

Ongoing support from staff at the National Paideia Center throughout the school year—ideally, eight or nine days per year on site— helps staff as they work with seminars and projects. "In the first year, we often do model seminars that teachers may or may not have the opportunity to observe. Because they may have other responsibilities, many principals videotape the seminars so that faculty members will have observed at least one seminar with their students led by somebody from the Center."

Later in the year, Paideia staff like to coteach seminars, and by the end of the year they offer feedback to teachers after observing them conduct seminars. However, coaching teachers is a delicate—and diplomatic—skill, Roberts asserts.

"We are sensitive to the fact that unless teachers ask for direct feedback, they may not necessarily appreciate it. For that reason, we offer feedback that applies to the entire group. We always include the opportunity to ask questions so that nobody is embarrassed individually if we are critical."

The School Leader's Role

In what ways is the principal's role in the Paideia Program critical? How does the principal fit into the program—and how should he or she move it forward?

Roberts recalls the early days of the Paideia Program. "In the original Paideia Principles," he says, "Mortimer Adler was adamant that the principal was the instructional leader in the school. Although other people were saying it at that time—1982—it hadn't permeated school culture.

"Adler's concept," he continues, "was that the school principal not only is the instructional leader, but ought to be engaged with the faculty and the community in the reform of the school. The principal also ought to be a model learner."

Principals in Paideia schools are urged to be model learners in many tangible ways, Roberts says. "Kids should never see the principal without a book in his or her hand. The principal always should talk to students about reading and should take any chance to go into a classroom and lead a seminar."

He adds, "We want the principal to be ahead of the learning curve in a school."

This goal requires that principals receive seminar training prior to faculty training so that they can help energize and motivate staff about its utility. In addition, principals are urged to participate in the training side by side with their staff. "If they do, they will have a common vocabulary," Roberts says.

Moving Forward With Change

Although some reforms insist upon consensus before moving forward with change, the Paideia Program seeks a blend of democratic input and realistic timelines for implementation. "We want adults involved in the decisionmaking process," Roberts says, "but once the decision has been made we think it is in the best interests of the kids if schools move forward in a very focused and unified way."

He notes, "If this makes us a little uncomfortable, if we have to work harder to deliver our curriculum, this is what we are going to do."

The Paideia Program is more prescriptive than some other reforms that put a premium on democratic decisionmaking, Roberts notes. "During the first year, we keep returning to the school and saying: The decisionmaking process is over in many ways. We already have agreed that every child who comes to school here needs a certain number of seminars. Now we are going to deliver. In that sense, we are prescriptive and forceful."

Evaluating and Measuring Success

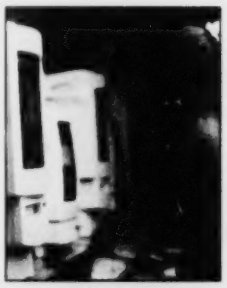
How does the Paideia Program measure success? What evaluation is integral to the program—and what plans for empirical studies exist?

Roberts is the first to say that standardized tests do not measure what the Paideia Program is trying to accomplish. "We are not the school reform program," he says bluntly, "that is likely to turn around your standardized test scores in three to four years because they are not testing what we do."

But don't schools need some uniform measures that hold them accountable for results? "States that only give multiple choice tests that are information based," Roberts replies, "with very little conceptual testing and no writing samples simply aren't congruent with our program."

The program does use a variety of assessment instruments. "We work with teachers to show them how to use these instruments with their kids to evaluate the quality of seminar instruction and coached projects. We want to learn how successful a seminar was at any given time.

"We also teach how to use these instruments with students so that teachers can



Photos, PhotoDisc

Outcomes have to revolve around the difference in classroom practice. "We need to ask: Have we changed the ways teachers behave when they are in the classroom with the kids? Have we changed the behavior of all of the teachers a child has?"

continue the improvement process in our absence."

At a more comprehensive level, Roberts points to a four-year study of schools in Guilford County, North Carolina, conducted by a research team from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. "This team is looking at outcomes that include attendance, attitude toward school, and discipline referrals. They also are interested in the teacher's view about whether the student is more articulate because of the seminars."

Standardized test scores from the state of North Carolina are just one of perhaps 30 outcomes measured by these researchers, Roberts says. "At the end of each of the four years, we will learn from the researchers where we have been more successful and in which schools. This should be invaluable to us in the future because it will tell us what we do well and what we don't do well. It may tell us that Paideia is a great program if you are a school in Maryland but not if you are a school somewhere else where you are pressured by state standardized test scores."

But outcomes, Roberts insists, have to revolve around the difference in classroom practice. "We need to ask: Have we changed the ways teachers behave when they are in the classroom with the kids? Have we changed the behavior of all of the teachers a child has?"

The Future of Paideia

As Roberts looks ahead—particularly cognizant of the impact of the Porter-Obey legislation—his view is hopeful, but cautious. "All of us engaged in the reform process," he warns, "need to be incredibly careful about how much work we take on. In order to maintain strict quality control, we will only work with a number of schools where we can be fairly certain we can implement the program successfully."

In 1998-99, the National Paideia Center will take on only one large implementation site, with more schools to follow in successive years. "We will pick a place where we think we have the best chance to do the best work," Roberts says. "The first reason for that approach is our capacity. Given our capacity, we have to do good onsite training of the entire faculty with extensive follow-up during the school year."

He sees danger ahead for reformers who over-extend themselves. "Four to five years from now, evaluators will be looking at test scores from the schools funded by the Porter-Obey legislation. They also will want to see teachers in the classroom who can demonstrate dramatically effective teaching.

"If we go through another cycle of change that has no perceived impact, money will dry up," he continues. "I am willing to be measured on how big an impact we have on teacher behavior in the classroom. However, I can't guarantee that we will change test scores quickly in every state in which we work, because that would be a fool's errand."

The Porter-Obey legislation is both an opportunity and a warning to reformers like Roberts. "When we look ahead, we hope that evaluators are going to want to see teachers in the classrooms doing dramatically effective teaching. We hope a lot of things," he adds.

Roberts hopes that public expectations will not be dashed and school staff will not encounter all-too-familiar disappointments with the reform process. "I would rather see some of the Porter-Obey money go unspent this year," he says, "than gobbled up in a situation where group A takes on 300 schools, group B takes on 500 schools, and group C takes on 400 schools. Three or four years from now there is no perceivable difference in those schools, and we have to start over with less money and yet another bad experience behind us."

Implementing Comprehensive Reform: THE STORIES OF THREE SCHOOLS

Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood

How do the experiences of schools—each struggling with its own set of problems—illustrate the observations of the three leaders of the comprehensive reforms highlighted in this issue? What are some key issues that school principals and staff contend with as they work to implement each of these comprehensive reforms? Why did they select the reform they use—and what furthers their long-term commitment to it?

In this section, we are informed by the experiences of three very different schools that have each selected a different comprehensive reform to further its goals—with the paramount consideration of heightened student achievement. The principals and selected key staff from each school speak candidly of the reform process, professional development, working with the precepts of a reform, tailoring a reform to suit the needs of the school, and motivating staff to maintain quality control.

Photo, PhotoDisc

Lackland City Elementary School: Success for All

Lackland City Elementary School, a Title I school located in the Northside Independent School District on the west side of San Antonio, Texas, serves approximately 600 students with a variety of urgent needs. Ninety-three percent of the student body qualify for free and reduced lunch; 78 percent are Hispanic, 13 percent African American, and the remainder Caucasian. Approximately 50 percent of parents are unemployed and receive some sort of assistance. Lackland City Elementary School has a 35 percent mobility rate.

Dissatisfied with its student achievement—and determined to do better—Lackland City Elementary School made the commitment to comprehensive reform in the 1994-95 academic year through its choice of Success for All as the vehicle to bring about positive change.

In the years since that decision, student achievement has improved dramatically. In 1994, the number of fifth graders at Lackland who passed the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in reading was only 51 percent. In 1995, after one year of Success for All, that percentage jumped to 63—and in 1997 to 80 percent. In mathematics, the gains were similar. In 1994, 55 percent of Lackland fifth graders passed the TAAS; in 1997, 93 percent passed.

Success for All addressed the needs of Lackland City Elementary in the following ways:

- *Provided research-based strategies to focus and improve instruction, particularly in reading.*
- *Built staff cohesiveness around a common mission, one that refused to abandon children to school failure.*
- *Worked proactively with parents and family members to involve them in the learning and school life of their children, by building nurturing bonds of support.*
- *Served as a catalyst for schoolwide reform and experimentation.*

Jerry Allen, Lackland City Elementary's principal, has an unusual appreciation of staff dissatisfaction. Instead of regarding it as a negative, corrosive emotion, Allen sees dissatisfaction with the status quo as one of the most powerful tools a school leader can wield to bring about lasting change.

At the same time, he maintains, school leaders and staff must internalize a sense of accountability as a personal responsibility—not someone else's problem.

Although this may sound severe, Allen comes across as a kindly figure with distinct, high expectations—one who applauds stiff state assessment systems for imposing a new sense of rigor upon schools and staff.

"Any campus," Allen begins, "needs to be goal oriented. We need to internalize our failures, not shut them off with one excuse or another. When those values are internalized, a need to improve seems to occur.

"State assessments," he continues, "assist teachers in doing a better job. At Lackland City Elementary, we teach much better than we used to teach—and part of the reason is that our achievement is assessed more closely than it used to be."

Another reason, Allen believes, stems from the advent of Success for All in 1994, a comprehensive reform designed to take low-achieving children of disadvantaged backgrounds and propel them toward academic success. Reflecting on Lackland City Elementary's status prior to Success for All, Allen paints a picture of his staff that many educators will recognize: stressed by the neediness of its population and, although well-intentioned, simply not able to bring about significant gains in achievement.

"We were very successful about 50 percent of the time," Allen says. But teaching staff were increasingly frustrated—stymied by the varied, urgent needs of an extremely economically disadvantaged student population.

That frustration began to invade classroom practice and schoolwide attitude. "That frustration," Allen adds, "started to turn into an acceptance of the status quo. Teachers began to believe that they worked as hard as they could, but they just couldn't internalize the failure of the children.

"That attitude," he cautions, "is very dangerous."

A 50 percent success rate, Allen points out, also means a 50 percent failure rate—which should be unacceptable to any educator.

Determined to do better, a schoolwide committee appointed to study the achievement problem discovered Success for All and brought it to Allen's attention, which led to school visits to see the reform in action. "We studied the research on Success for All very carefully," he notes, "because we all agreed we should not waste time on reforms without a research base that specifically addressed student achievement."

Although Success for All is distinguished by its integration of a social component into a strong curricular and instructional program, Allen admits that this component didn't influence the school's vote to adopt the reform. "We didn't really know how important that aspect would be when we started out," he says candidly.

Instead, the reform jolted school staff into new values, attitudes, and pedagogy—a dramatic but necessary change. "Many teachers unfortunately drive old cars," Allen says, "and too often those cars sometimes conk out. They won't get you where you need to go. When that happens, you have to junk that car that won't work and buy a new car."

That analogy, he adds, is one that Lackland City Elementary has made schoolwide as a result of Success for All. "We already had tweaked our curriculum. We did all sorts of things that we thought would work. We thought they would be exciting for children and would impact favorably on student achievement."

But the results were disappointing. "Although they were fun, exciting, and enjoyable, they did not directly affect student achievement."

Success for All, Allen says, gave staff much-needed impetus to move forward in a different direction from what had been tried and hadn't been successful—or at best, had been partially successful.

In the process, staff made an important discovery about the process and pace of reform. "We found that change and reform is an evolutionary process," he points out. "Change scares everyone, particularly when it deals with structures."

But change is also positive, he quickly adds, and staff do not have to wait for years to gain a sense that they are moving on the right track. "As we started to discover success, the change took on a different feeling. When we weren't as reluctant to study research and look at newer ways of doing things, we ended up changing just about everything. We restructured our entire curriculum both in its approach to instruction and in our approach to the community."

Structure and Specificity

One of the most welcome aspects of Success for All, Allen believes, is its structure and specificity. "Teachers can end up feeling hopeless," he notes, "because they have to try to create the world every day in their classes. They spend their weekends dreaming up things to try, put them in lesson plans, and see if they will work."

Elma Noyola, Success for All's facilitator, speaks from experience when she remembers her life as a teacher prior to Success for All. "I had three reading groups and a bilingual group," she says, "and many days I would tell my students:

Jerry Allen, Lackland City Elementary's principal, has an unusual appreciation of staff dissatisfaction. Instead of regarding it as a negative, corrosive emotion, Allen sees dissatisfaction with the status quo as one of the most powerful tools a school leader can wield to bring about lasting change.

Photos, PhotoDisc

'I'll get to you tomorrow'—but tomorrow never came. I never got to all the children the way I would have liked to. I felt inadequate. I was very good at what I was doing, but I was only reaching the top two-thirds of the students."

Allen adds, "The structure of this program is a welcome relief to our teachers. They know that they are doing things that are effective. The program has been replicated nationally; there is research that shows that it works in the inner city of Baltimore, on the west side of San Antonio, and on a Native American reservation in Arizona."

In a sense, Allen saw his own role as that of an evangelist, motivating and encouraging staff—as well as working tirelessly to instill a sense of hope. Again and again, he returned to the strong research base of the program to steer his efforts. "It is important to maintain the integrity of the program," he says. "If you want the results, the research says that certain things need to be done."

In the early days of Success for All at Lackland City Elementary, frequently a teacher would approach Allen with ideas for instruction that differed from the reform's programmatic structure. "I would approve those, but not during the 90-minute reading period," he notes. "In those 90 minutes, I asked that they remain faithful to the model. That satisfied both of us."

The Need for Relentlessness

A quality that is key to Success for All is maintaining a type of relentlessness that refuses to allow any student to fail. In what ways is that important—and how has Allen worked to encourage that characteristic in school staff?

"Relentlessness," Allen says, "is our password to get into the school. There is a critical difference between saying all children can learn and really being committed to that belief. Too many of us might say that we believe all children can learn, but the proof of that is when you produce children who do learn."

To maintain an ethos of relentlessness, Allen tells staff that they may not allow a child to fall back in reading. "I ask that they refer the child to us when the child first stumbles," he explains. "We have the strategies to help the teacher make that child successful.

"When teachers do that, they begin to see that this program does make a difference with that child. Next, they begin to say: 'Maybe this child can learn.'"

Noyola works with relentlessness in her own fashion—adding a gentle layer to it. "I always ask teachers if I may share a wonderful strategy with them," she says. "I am not there to evaluate. I am there to share so much with them that I have learned. I have been in their shoes."

During the first year of Success for All's implementation, a major attitudinal change begins to color the practice and beliefs of teachers and other staff schoolwide, Allen reports. This change, he believes, runs contrary to the practices of schools serving high-needs students without a research-based structure to guide their efforts.

"We have many visitors on our campus," he says. "I ask them to explain their reading program to me. They are silent, because they do not have a clear vision of the program."

Instead, Allen reports that the typical scenario for teachers serving high-needs students is grim: teachers are isolated, working individually without adequate support, knowing that a state assessment will be administered in May, and are already frustrated by the achievement that will be reported for their grade level. The key to an effective reform, Allen maintains, is solid research evidence of effectiveness—and a clear structure that links disparate components.

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"Typically," he adds, "these visitors may point to a basal program that they have, but they cannot discuss the components of the program and how these pieces fit together—or how how they affect student achievement."

In contrast, Allen believes that school staff who work with Success for All have no difficulty discussing and analyzing their practice.

Maintaining Focus and Momentum

Is it difficult to stay focused on goals for academic achievement in the face of such demanding student needs? How does a reform such as Success for All enable staff to maintain their commitment?

"With the teachers who have been with Success for All in this school for four years," Allen says, "we spend a lot of time discussing how to maintain our passion. All of us meet regularly. I will tell teachers collectively what I saw during classroom visits that we can't allow to continue.

"For example, I may have seen partner reading but one partner wasn't paying attention. Two years ago, that wouldn't have been tolerated. We need to constantly remind each other of these things so that we keep the reins tight, we maintain the integrity of the program, and we make sure that all components of the program are used to the best degree possible."

When teachers ask for help or admit they don't understand something, Allen is pleased. "When you can get your faculty to that point, real staff development can take place on a daily basis," he points out. "Our facilitator or an assistant can go in and teach a class while the teacher who wants some help can observe someone else's class and pick up an idea."

Transfer With Dignity

If staff are too resistant to the tenets of Success for All, Allen believes in counseling them to find another school more suited to their instructional style and educational philosophy. "I have had two teachers who didn't make it with us," he explains, "and I knew they were good teachers. This program was not their style."

Allen explains that Success for All no longer is a reform: it is the identity of Lackland City Elementary. "Success for All," he emphasizes, "is who we are. We are a Success for All school. We are Success for All teachers. If teachers are willing to put forth the effort, I will provide every opportunity for them to learn."

He also points out that if teachers do not learn the program or abide by its tenets, that does not make them poor teachers. "If they aren't willing to do so, we have a large district. If they would like to transfer into a school more suited to their style of teaching, that is not a negative. Both teachers chose to do that."

He adds with some amusement, "Both called me the next year and told me to let them know if I had an opening."

Building Social Support for High Achievement

Part of Success for All's strategy builds a web of support for children and their families to help ensure that students will not fail academically. At Lackland City Elementary, a preexisting Child Advocacy Committee fit neatly into Success for All's strategy. This committee includes the school's social worker, Allen as principal, the school's educational psychologist, the school nurse, Noyola as the Success for All facilitator, the mathematics facilitator, the special education facilitator, and the school counselor.

Allen explains, "Teachers refer to this committee any and all possible problems that might interfere with a child's getting ready to learn. And we know if a child is struggling with social issues, that child is not here with a full, clear opportunity to learn. Our challenge is to solve these problems."

One of the benefits of this committee, he believes, is that communication between school personnel is no longer fragmented. "Before, children were serviced by many people who frequently didn't communicate with each other. Now we develop a case folder for each child and one individual takes charge of the case."

Noyola particularly enjoys home visits, often considered an extra burden in some schools. "If a teacher tells me that two children in her class aren't bringing in the cards that are signed

Allen reports that the typical scenario for teachers serving high-needs students is grim: teachers are isolated, working individually without adequate support, knowing that a state assessment will be administered in May, and are already frustrated by the achievement that will be reported for their grade level. The key to an effective reform, Allen maintains, is solid research evidence of effectiveness—and a clear structure that links disparate components.

by parents showing they are reading to them at home, I take their names and go with our school liaison person to the home."

She works to make these visits as positive and nonthreatening as possible. "If a parent doesn't read or speak English, they are comfortable talking to me because I am bilingual. I tell them to give the child their time; to listen to them read anyway. All we want is for the parent to give the child 20 minutes to read to them."

She adds, "Even if parents don't have the skill in English, we are trying to teach them that they can still offer support."

And parents receive school staff in a positive way, Noyola reports. "We believe that if we treat parents with respect they will work with us. We always begin our home visits with positives, with what the child has been doing in school that has been wonderful. Then we ask if they can help us with something concrete.

"We tell them that we know they are busy and that we are mothers ourselves. We suggest that while they are preparing dinner, they have the child pull up a chair and read while they listen."

In this way, Noyola and Allen agree, children's lives outside school are not considered something with no relationship to their achievement. Instead, both children and families of different cultures are affirmed by Lackland City Elementary's staff—and engaged actively in the education of their children.

Facilitating Success: The School Leader's Role

Allen wants to emphasize that Success for All—although it does come equipped with materials—is not a canned program that offers materials and little else. "Success for All offers strategies for instruction," he notes. "We try to impress upon people that books and materials don't teach children. Instead, the teacher has to have a clear understanding of the strategies that will help him or her teach."

The Success for All facilitator is a key resource for teachers, he adds—and needs the principal's support so that he or she is not seen as a threat to teachers, but as a support. "We've established our facilitator's role so that she is the point person for teachers," Allen says.

And Allen's vision of himself as a school leader has changed dramatically as a result of Success for All, he reports. "I have been a principal for 18 years," he says, "and I have a much greater vision of my job.

"While we always say the principal is the instructional leader, most of us never are. We run around putting out fires. Today, I have an assistant principal who takes care of those things while I help teachers become better teachers. I work to bring about reform on campus that will create a better learning environment. I am not continually involved in the daily operations of the school.

"For the assistant principal, this is a wonderful opportunity that will allow him to move on to his own campus. If Success for All has done anything for me personally, it has cleared my vision of what instructional leadership is all about."

Could Lackland City Elementary have been just as successful with another comprehensive reform? Allen admits he has pondered this question for a long time.

"Success for All," he replies, "is not for everyone. However, I do not believe there is another program that compares to it in dealing with economically disadvantaged children and parents. Success for All allows us to be the very best neighbor our parents have. We may not be able to break their cycle of economic poverty, but we can break their cycle of intellectual poverty."

Northport Public School: The Coalition of Essential Schools

Northport Public School, located in Northport, Michigan, is a K-12 school within a K-12 district in a rural resort community on Lake Michigan. Serving approximately 320 students under one roof, Northport embraced the Coalition of Essential Schools' principles ten years ago and has remained actively involved with the Coalition ever since.

Although Northport is a small, rural community, its student population is diverse. Approximately 12 percent are Native American, 17 percent Hispanic, 70 percent Caucasian, and 1 percent African American. Families are primarily middle-class, with some students of poverty and others from more affluent homes.

Although the Coalition of Essential Schools has pioneered assessments that differ from standardized achievement tests, Northport's students score well on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), the state assessment. The test is administered at grades 4 and 7 in reading and math. Approximately 92.9 percent of Northport's students at the seventh-grade level attained satisfactory scores compared to the state average of 51.4 percent. In reading, 78.6 percent of Northport's seventh-graders attained satisfactory scores, contrasted with only 40.4 percent statewide.

On Michigan's High School Proficiency Test, given to all 11th graders, Northport's 11th graders attained proficient status at the following percentages in 1997: 88.2 percent in reading, 64.7 percent in writing, 94.1 percent in science, and 82.4 percent in mathematics. This achievement is particularly impressive when contrasted to the numbers of 11th graders statewide who attain proficient status: 41.1 percent in reading, 30.3 percent in writing, 38.5 percent in science, and 52.9 percent in mathematics.

Northport's principal, Don Hungerford, credits the match between the Coalition's guiding principles, the educational philosophy of the community, and the educational dreams of staff, families, and students as the foundation for Northport's success—as well as the conscious decision to work actively to make Northport's small size an asset, not a liability.

The benefits of membership in the Coalition of Essential Schools can be seen through Northport's emphasis on:

- *Vigorous teacher collegiality, collaboration, and sustained, purposeful professional dialogue, which actively combats teacher isolation and infrequent conversation about classroom practice and school structures.*
- *Different roles for teachers and students, with the teacher as coach and the student as worker, including plenty of parent involvement in what students learn as well as how well they learn it.*
- *Exhibitions and portfolios to supplement more traditional forms of assessment.*
- *Cross-age student seminars and projects that lead to the production of real-world products.*

Staff had a rather unusual complaint about the reform process: the lack of time for reflection on how well they had met their goals. "We wanted to do really thoughtful reflection," Stowe says. "We wanted to ask: Is this the best way? Was it better than the old way? What worked from the past that was better than what we are doing now? What is working now that could be even better?"

Aspirations for higher education, solid and challenging futures, and eventual career success for their children led the community of Northport to push for a comprehensive approach to school reform, Northport's principal Don Hungerford says—along with a hunger for an education of quality.

"Our families wanted their children to have a sounder education," he says, "not necessarily broader, but deeper. We also wanted to make our learning more authentic."

He adds, "We want our children, whether they go on to college or not, to be more prepared for life."

These beliefs provided the initial impetus toward the Coalition of Essential Schools as the vessel to carry Northport's plans for comprehensive reform, he recollects, which began ten years ago with a new requirement: senior projects for graduation. Hungerford, who was teaching in the school at that time, was involved in the first step, which was the creation of a separate, tiny middle school that served as the testing ground for many of the Coalition's ideas about structures, curriculum, and pedagogy.

This middle school was housed within the building but treated as a school-within-a-school. "We developed a middle school team," Hungerford recalls, "and a middle school government. Six years ago we moved to a block schedule at the middle school because it allows more integration of curriculum."

This move was followed three years ago by the creation of a similar high school team and a high school block schedule.

Donna Stowe, a high school humanities and English teacher, saw Northport's move toward comprehensive reform as an opportunity for professional renewal and new collegiality—something that she reports was not unusual for other teachers. "As a teacher, you can feel that you're in a tunnel," she says candidly. "As we worked with Coalition staff, attended conferences, and opened up our thinking to include a national perspective, it was really exciting."

Hungerford adds, "I had been a teacher for 20 years when we became involved with the Coalition, and it came at the right point in my career. As we became involved with middle school reform, we realized that it was compatible with the Coalition—and a good starting place for us to change our structures. At the school, we were given so much autonomy that we were able to spend a full semester planning how the middle school would look."

Parents of middle school students were more favorably disposed to the Coalition's precepts than staff originally predicted, he says. "We encountered much more resistance from parents at the high school level. Those parents wanted to see exactly when their kids had social studies and English. In fact, seminars and interdisciplinary curricula were fought at the high school level."

High school juniors and seniors also resisted both the structural and curricular changes, Hungerford relates. "They resisted the longer blocks of time, but their resistance didn't hold up very long because there were many different types of activities within that time."

Comprehensive Reform: The Early Process

Although change can be difficult, an underlying conviction that they were on the right path kept staff on course, Stowe reports. "We believed in the Coalition as a reform," she says, "because it focuses primarily on the student and having that student use his or her mind well. Who can argue with that?"

Instead, staff had a rather unusual complaint about the reform process: the lack of time for reflection on how well they had met their goals. "We wanted to do really thoughtful reflection," Stowe says. "We

wanted to ask: Is this the best way? Was it better than the old way? What worked from the past that was better than what we are doing now? What is working now that could be even better?"

She adds, "It is difficult to build those kinds of reflective processes into the school year."

Once the fundamental structure of the middle school was established—with an emphasis on teacher teaming, interdisciplinary work, block scheduling, and student projects—its momentum spilled over into all grade levels, Stowe says.

"After the interdisciplinary middle school was developed," she notes, "we decided we needed teams of teachers dedicated only to the high school curriculum. Once the middle school was in place, we were able to move into structures that may not necessarily be part of the Coalition's principles, but tie in well with the kinds of mental habits we want our kids to have."

As comprehensive reform began to sweep the school, staff alternated between feelings of empowerment—the opportunity to change significantly the structures and curriculum of the school—and feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of change. Stowe says, "We worked on everything, from tiny things such as the fact that we didn't want to hear bells ring, to much more major changes.

"Everything," she underscores, "came from the grass roots. We brainstormed together with the support of our superintendent, who really wanted to see change."

Team teaching was an especially critical part of the reform, Stowe remembers, because it broke down long-standing feelings of isolation and fragmentation between content areas and staff. It also was a structural change that had strong effects on both curriculum and pedagogy.

"We felt we were working in little boxes," she says, "and we knew there was much more expertise on our staff than we could access at any given time."

Before working with the principles of the Coalition, Stowe remembers an isolated school day unbroken by any substantive professional contact among teachers. "We never had the chance to talk to each other about what we were doing or how things could fit together," she remembers. "Even though we had the same students, we all had different prep periods and different lunch hours. Our schedule looked like a patchwork quilt."

But what about the lack of structure that can result when everything comes from the grassroots level? How did staff cope with feelings that they were overburdened from the responsibility of codeveloping the reform?

"We all knew it was good," Stowe responds thoughtfully, "but some of us *did* feel overwhelmed. But when you have a lot to do for a purpose, it is not nearly as bad as when you have a lot to do and no purpose for doing it.

"There were enough key players on staff that we kept the purpose in mind."

Hungerford points to the common prep time as a structural vehicle that began to break down conventional barriers across content areas. This, he says, became a tool that enabled staff to begin to communicate with one another about powerful educational ideas.

"Our teaming was rather traditional in that we had two teachers in a combination of humanities with a breakout of language arts and social studies," he explains. "This allowed us to use the philosophy of the Coalition where the teacher is the coach and the student is the worker."

Stowe adds, "Our process is very typical of the restructuring process. We have brand-new staff alongside veterans who have been through everything. With team teaching as well as other changes, you take

Photo, PhotoDisc

Reflection is the beginning of reform.

Mark Twain

As comprehensive reform began to sweep the school, staff alternated between feelings of empowerment—the opportunity to change significantly the structures and curriculum of the school—and feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of change.

people where they are, let them see what's good about the changes, and move from there."

Changes in Classroom Practice

Hungerford believes that the most significant difference in classrooms since the arrival of the Coalition's principles is seen in both the instruction and the active engagement of students. "If you walk into a middle school class," he explains, "you will see all students actively engaged in whatever is going on. Classes are not nearly as text driven as they used to be; students are much more actively involved. We do a lot of writing across the curriculum."

Stowe points to a change in her own teaching. "I focus much more on critical thinking than on content," she notes. "Certainly content is very important, but I like to see a student go more deeply into a single aspect of content, rather than memorizing facts."

When she structures a lesson, Stow plans activities that require analysis and evaluation—preferably with a problem-solving approach that students enjoy. "I use a constructivist approach," she says, "because I know that I myself learn better in that way."

A specific example, she explains, might occur in a seventh-grade English class. "Instead of assigning a standard book report on a biography, we are putting together a magazine with feature articles they have written on the people they have researched. They also have to devise advertisements that are applicable to the period of the day and their magazine, design a cover, and conduct an interview to use in the feature article. This involves a lot of English skills, but it is approached as a project with a real-world product."

But Stowe emphasizes that previous forms of teaching have not been abandoned; comprehensive reform does not necessarily mean that previously effective practice is discarded. "I always return to our standards for a product or assignment," she says. "What are our criteria for a feature article? I also look at our state standards to see what kind of genre might be applicable to certain competencies."

Benefits of Comprehensive Reform

When Hungerford and Stowe look back on previous teaching and learning at Northport, they report that not only do their students perform well, but teacher collegiality and student engagement have grown by bounds. Stowe points to the senior projects, one of the springboards Northport used to move into comprehensive reform.

These projects, she explains, now occur at all levels, but she illustrates with an example from a junior English class. "The English teacher and the history teacher work together using a print and multimedia presentation of some historical event that has current repercussions. Their collaboration is ongoing.

"At the sophomore level, I currently work with the science teacher on a scientific investigation of a biological problem. This is tied into a demonstration, somewhat similar to a science fair, but considerably more complicated.

"For example," she continues, "next week's seminar will last a full week and focus on how technology has influenced the laws of nature."

This essential question, she says, aligns with the Coalition's belief in essential questions in seminar settings. "One of the things that is so wonderful about this," she adds, "is that you might hear a freshman talking to a senior in the hall about a seminar. They are all talking about the same assignment.

"This generates a greater interest and a deeper learning than we would see if all the kids were together in the hall, one had a science assignment, one had an algebra assignment, and all high school students were separated by grade level."

Assessing Student Progress

Although Northport's students perform well on standardized achievement tests, staff believe that those tests do not measure accurately what their students have learned. Because of the Coalition's belief in authentic assessment, staff have developed 11 outcomes that each

high school senior must meet in order to graduate.

Stowe says, "They are rather general, but the kids have to document in their portfolios examples that defend their performance on a given outcome."

Students are expected to be able to cooperate with others and be open to change, she adds by way of illustration. "Most portfolios are set up to conform to the 11 outcomes. The portfolios maintain a fairly high quality because students don't include items unless they have a good reason for believing they are providing evidence that they are meeting an outcome."

Student-led conferences, K-12, provide another innovative way in which students, parents, and staff discuss academic achievement. "All of our students have annual conferences with their parents in which they review their work for the year," she explains.

"We have a practice day for students in which teachers make suggestions on how to present their portfolios, and then the actual conference day. Seniors can choose whether to present a portfolio or take final exams. As we progress, we are encouraging more and more students to put together a portfolio that reflects their complete performance in the school."

This encouragement would provide a longitudinal view of student performance, she notes, rather than an annual review of accomplishments. "I've done some action research that has helped the portfolios evolve," Stowe adds. "I begin by giving kids a survey at the beginning of the year about the purpose of portfolios, what they think they should contain, how they can be used.

"The first year, they had little sense of what portfolios should contain or what their purpose might be. That has improved, but even so, portfolios have been up and down with some years stronger than other years."

Considerations for Comprehensive Reform

What advice does Northport's staff have for school leaders and staff interested in comprehensive reform? What considerations are especially key—and what have they learned from their different perspectives as school leader and teacher?

Hungerford reflects briefly before answering. "The Coalition offers core ideas and principles to which you need to subscribe," he says. "But it also offers a great deal of autonomy. Once you buy into the core principles, you can select, mold, modify, and tailor reform to fit your individual school. I like that, because I like not having to fit within a template someone has placed over me."

The Coalition offers individual schools the opportunity to embrace and celebrate their own circumstances and values, he adds. "Yes, you are a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools," he points out, "but you are also Northport. Even though we have tried to educate people in our community and in surrounding communities about the Coalition, many still do not understand exactly what it is. Even people in neighboring school districts may not understand.

"But," he concludes, "if someone visits, they will see our goals and then they will understand. In almost 30 years of teaching, I haven't found anything that was Utopia. The Coalition gives us a framework that is strong enough to provide good direction but not so strong that we cannot be autonomous."

"The Coalition offers core ideas and principles to which you need to subscribe. But it also offers a great deal of autonomy. Once you buy into the core principles, you can select, mold, modify, and tailor reform to fit your individual school. I like that, because I like not having to fit within a template someone has placed over me."

More Comprehensive School Reform Models. . .

The 17 comprehensive school reform models listed in the Obey-Porter legislation represent a range of strategies and philosophies. This issue of *New Leaders* explores three of the models in depth. Below we provide overviews of two additional models for your consideration.

Co-NECT Schools

Co-NECT is an organization that helps K-12 educators use technology for whole-school change and improved academic results. Its goal is to help all students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for success in the 21st century.

Co-NECT provides planning resources, professional development, and technical support tailored to the goals of schools and their communities—with an emphasis on technology merged with academics. Its philosophy is based on the belief that all educational stakeholders need to be a part of the educational process.

Developed by a group of educators based at BBN, a company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that helped build the Internet, Co-NECT brings together effective practices that include teamwork based on results, project-based learning, authentic assessment, and the use of the Internet and other technologies to enrich learning.

Co-NECT is sponsored by New American Schools, a coalition of teachers, school administrators, parents, community leaders, business leaders, and policymakers from around the United States.

For more information, contact:

Co-NECT Schools
70 Fawcett Street • Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 873-5612 • www.co-nect.com

America's Choice School Design

Developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy, America's Choice School Design is a comprehensive, standards-based reform for K-12 schools. It has one primary goal: Doing whatever it takes to ensure that all but the most severely handicapped students reach an internationally benchmarked standard of achievement in English, language arts, mathematics, and science by the time they graduate.

America's Choice School Design includes the following specific curricular goals:

- Students will read fluently by the end of third grade
- Students will be ready for algebra by the beginning of eighth grade
- Students will be able to write an essay of the quality of an article in their local newspaper by the end of tenth grade
- Students will have a good grasp of the basic concepts in biology, physics, and chemistry by the time they graduate from high school

Based on the America's Choice Performance Standards, the curriculum is designed to get students who are below grade level up to grade level as quickly as possible. Technology is used as a tool to support student learning. Students are assessed with America's Choice Reference Examinations, standardized tests, and weekly program embedded assessments.

For more information, contact:

America's Choice
National Center on Education and the Economy
700 11th Street, N.W., Suite 750 • Washington, DC 20001
(202) 783-3668 • www.ncee.org/OurPrograms/narePage.html

Madison Elementary School: The Paideia Program

Madison Elementary School is located in McLeansville, North Carolina, a suburb of Greensboro. Predominantly middle class in socioeconomic status, its student population of approximately 600 is primarily Caucasian with 14.8 percent African American students. Approximately 22 percent of Madison Elementary's students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Madison Elementary began working with the Paideia Program in 1995, primarily because a core group of teachers had become interested in its principles. The arrival of a new principal five years ago institutionalized the reform; teachers schoolwide received training to ground them in the Program's principles and equip them to teach according to its strategies. These and other teachers find professional renewal in Paideia's project-oriented approach to instruction, along with rigorous seminars that focus on works of literature.

Madison Elementary's test scores reveal that the Paideia Program has made a positive impact, particularly when compared with test scores five years ago, prior to a systematic implementation of the reform. At that time, only 24 percent of fourth graders received a passing score on state standardized tests. In the 1996-97 school year, the percentage of third, fourth, and fifth graders scoring at or above grade level in reading ranged from 71 to 78.8 percent. In math, these percentages for the same grades ranged from 74 percent to 80.2 percent. In the 1996-97 school year, Madison Elementary also met its goal: All of its students were reading at grade level by the end of first grade.

The Paideia Program spurred Madison Elementary School's staff to adopt the following new practices:

- *A change from primarily didactic to project-based teaching and learning*
- *An emphasis on "real-world" products resulting from student learning*
- *A focus on higher-order thinking and reasoning skills, nurtured through seminar participation centered on literature*
- *Collaboration between teaching staff on seminars and projects, which has refined and stimulated both pedagogy and student engagement in their work*

Reform, says Madison Elementary's principal, Denese Byrd, invariably should spring from a school's needs—and once chosen, the reform needs constant commitment and careful planning to ensure that it will not only take root, but flourish.

"There has to be a philosophy and a vision that is consistent throughout the school," she says, "and that vision needs to be carried out." Madison Elementary's needs, she explains, were not dramatically different from the needs of other schools—which suggests that the Paideia Program can be equally beneficial in other schools.

Seeing a reform's theoretical framework and strategies translated into concrete, successful classroom practice is particularly important to Byrd, who notes that many schools are characterized by teacher independence and unmitigated isolation—with many unrelated instructional activities taking place in the same building. "Elementary schools, in particular, need instructional leaders," she says. "They need people who can define the school's needs and pull teachers together so that they can work more effectively with the students."

Like other schools, Madison Elementary is no stranger to a variety of external programs and policies that can overwhelm

and frustrate staff if not coordinated. "We have a multitude of laws," Byrd observes, "and we have policies to implement. We also have character education programs, science programs, and math programs. If a school doesn't have a method for pulling together these different resources, good teachers will burn out."

Research that supported the importance of engaging students in their own learning helped sustain the schoolwide transition to the Paideia Program, Byrd asserts—pointing to the solid foundation a research base offers a reform. "These studies played a big part in our classroom practice," she adds. "The first summer I was principal, all staff received the seminar training, and the following summer they all learned the coaching. Last summer, we sent everybody for assessment training."

In addition to promoting more sophisticated thinking for students, Lee believes Paideia has raised her own thinking to a different level. "Just as the kids moved forward, I did also," she notes.

As new teachers are incorporated into Madison Elementary's staff, they receive training during the summer that follows their initial appointment, Byrd notes—an ongoing commitment to the entire teaching staff that highlights the importance of ongoing professional development that is integral to the reform. An active push to reduce the amount of didactic teaching in the school has borne fruit, she reports, pointing to the ongoing generation of project-oriented teaching and learning.

Paideia's Effect on Teachers

Beverly Lee was one of the second-grade teachers who led the movement toward the Paideia Program and has worked with its concepts for approximately seven years. "It is very different from the way I was trained as a teacher," Lee admits, "but the seminars, in particular, helped me move from the more literal kinds of questions I used to ask to deep discussions about the author's real purpose for writing and what something really means."

In addition to promoting more sophisticated thinking for students, Lee believes Paideia has raised her own thinking to a different level. "Just as the kids moved forward, I did also," she notes.

Recalling a unit she taught second graders on "*The Gift of the Magi,*" Lee illustrates how a seminar can take wing. "We always begin by reading the text. I had to read this particular text to the class because of their reading level.

"My questions with this seminar, as with every seminar," she explains, "are intended to start a discussion among the children. Hopefully their discussion will continue without much intervention from us. In the early grades, students are learning the process of being in a seminar. They learn how to sit in a circle, how to talk without raising their hands, and how to avoid interrupting each other."

She adds with amusement, "This is very difficult for kindergartners, first and second graders."

In the early grades, teachers shape the seminars with more input than they do in the middle and upper grades, she clarifies. But even in the early grades, teachers tackle complicated concepts. "With *The Gift of the Magi,* we talked about wisdom and its meaning," Lee explains.

Wisdom is a sophisticated notion, she admits, but not too complex for young children. "After I read the story to them, we talked about wise gifts. Were the gifts that the people in the story gave each other wise? Why or why not? We talked about giving and whether it is always important to give a gift. Are there other things just as significant as gifts? Do we always need something tangible to show people we care about them?"

An unintended benefit, Lee adds, is the ability to weave in aspects of character with young children. "Particularly in the early grades, the seminars do bring in elements of character education," she says.

Seminars need to give children concepts too complex to understand on their own

without adult guidance, Lee emphasizes—but the adult guidance they receive must be carefully constructed. "One of the purposes of the seminar is for people to work together to figure out what the text means," she adds. "In the lower grades, we focus on elements in the text that relate to character because it is difficult to give second graders a text that is not completely over their heads."

Upper grades, she explains, typically would focus on documents central to U.S. history, such as the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution.

So that seminars do not disintegrate into meaningless chatter, the teacher's role is especially delicate and critical. "The text is always referred to," Lee points out. "So if a student tells me that her sister is mean, I ask how that relates to the story. Does something in the story remind you of that? Keeping them focused on the text is very, very important."

She acknowledges that when first leading seminars, she didn't thoroughly understand the importance of constantly reminding students of the text as an anchoring device. "We would talk about different things and not relate them to the text. Sometimes this is good because kids can open up and talk, but after doing this for years I now understand the importance of adhering to the text. It must be the central focus of the discussion."

Teachers are taught how to develop appropriate, open-ended seminar questions in the professional development and training they receive, Lee adds. "We learn opening questions, core questions, and closing questions with examples of each. Opening questions are intended to get kids into the text. Core questions break the text apart, and closure questions take the discussion beyond the text.

"What significance does this have in our lives?" Lee continues. "How do we apply what we have read and discussed?"

Over time and with experience leading seminars, the process is refined. "We worked together when we first began with seminars," she says, "going through our questions with each other. We would discuss which questions were good, which were not so good, how they could be changed, and which questions could be added—all before we actually conducted the seminar with our students."

This collaboration, Lee believes, is an especially key piece of the success of seminars. But projects are equally important, she emphasizes, because they generate a kind of excitement about learning that is increasingly difficult to achieve in most schools.

"If kids are excited about what they are doing," she says, "they will learn whether they know it or not. I want to be facilitating the kids' learning at least 50 percent of the time in an active way, not standing in front of the classroom talking. When kids can actually experience what they are learning, they learn so much more. When they see a real-world application for what they learn, such as a program for the PTA or a book for the Natural Science Center, they aren't just writing a paper for their teacher. They are writing a paper because it will end up in a book for the Natural Science Center."

Overcoming Obstacles

Although the Paideia Program has many benefits, Lee warns that it demands intellectual stamina and considerable energy from teachers. "It is very time-consuming," she notes, "because you must plan your instruction carefully. As a teacher, you constantly are trying to come up with products, projects, and activities that will be relevant to the kids' interests and relevant to the units of study you are trying to do."

More conventional planning in elementary schools, she points out, might consist of deciding which pages to cover on which days. "This is much more extensive. But the easy part is implementing your planning in the classroom. The kids are excited. That makes it very rewarding, and once you get into the proper mindset about planning, it becomes a habit."

The Paideia Program uses so-called three-column lesson plans as an organizing device to ensure that teachers keep didactic teaching at the recommended level of 10 percent or less. If a three-column lesson plan is produced properly, it will link didactic teaching to coaching and seminars through the coherent treatment of a unit that is being studied.

For example, if young children are studying dinosaurs, they may learn related vocabulary through didactic teaching, engage in a cooperative group activity about finding fossils, and read a book on hunting dinosaurs that is tied into a seminar discussion of the job of a paleontologist.

Producing these lesson plans, says Byrd, has symbolized the pace and process of the reform at Madison Elementary.

"At the beginning, we didn't get three-column lesson plans from every grade level," she explains, "but we've seen steady progress. Our third-grade teachers became excited about it and are doing them now. This year our first-grade teachers began to write the plans, and last year fourth grade caught on, so currently everyone is on board."

Pockets of individual resistance remain, although Byrd is not discouraged. "Teachers who are resistant," she says,

"don't understand the purpose of the lesson plans. One purpose is that when one plans thematically, the unit becomes more relevant for kids' lives."

Structural changes, such as planning time that links the same grade-level teachers, also help break down barriers to change, she believes. "We incorporated into our master schedule planning time for teachers so that second-grade teachers all plan at the same time, third-grade teachers at the same time, and so on. They also have a weekly planning time in addition to time one day a month when assistants take their classes so they can be freed up for a block of cooperative planning time."

New teachers, Byrd says, also bring fresh ideas gleaned from other teaching experiences or from their preservice experience. "More experienced teachers often hear these ideas and like them. This has helped these more experienced teachers get on board and join in the reform process."

Project-Based Teaching

One schoolwide project that intends to give something back to the community—as well as harness the community as a resource—is the school's plan to build a school garden and welcome the community into it. Byrd explains, "Kindergarten will have a spring garden and will also plant pumpkins as part of their curriculum, which they will later harvest."

Other grades will develop varied aspects of the gardens—to be called Madison Gardens—such as a butterfly garden, a grape arbor, and a nature trail. "We hope to make Madison Gardens a place with park benches and beautiful trees," Byrd continues, "where our grandparents can come and sit. In this way, our kids will be giving something back to the community."

In another popular project, the Apple Valley Simulation, the classroom takes on the appearance of a one-room schoolhouse in the early 1900s. Students are given names and personalities of students they have read about and take on their identities. In the process, Byrd explains, they will create products that relate to life in the early 1900s.

"If a teacher wants to try something like this, as long as it is structurally sound, I will go along with it," she adds.

As a school leader, Byrd maintains a balance between evaluation of current and previous efforts along with motivation so teachers do not become overwhelmed. "Primary teachers evaluated a Paideia seminar we held for staff, and they revealed different positives about the experience. They liked the time together because they were able to bond. They were able to spend time with other adults who also shared their interest in teaching. They got ideas, and also had fun sharing their opinions with other adults about topics that weren't related to education."

This was revealing, she adds, because in evaluations of the same seminar, fourth- and fifth-grade teachers felt the time could have been better spent working on lesson plans. "The lack of time," Byrd says carefully, "is definitely one of the biggest obstacles to change. While we have devoted daily, weekly, and monthly time for teaching planning, if we committed more time to it, they probably wouldn't see much of their students."

Gaining the trust of parents was not difficult, she adds. "I come from this community," she says, "and I was the principal at a high school that is ten minutes from here. People knew I had a lot of experience, but they didn't know how I would perform in an elementary school versus a secondary school."

But as she explained the curriculum, the school's mission, and the Paideia Program's role as a comprehensive reform intended to galvanize the school around a central theme—preparing critical thinkers to become a future generation of citizens—any distrust melted.

Byrd encourages other school leaders to take heart at the prospect of engaging in comprehensive reform, whether the Paideia Program is the chosen vehicle or another reform is selected. "Paideia is a reform that adds a very sensible structure to your efforts," she asserts. "It emphasizes literature, and we know that children need to be able to discuss literature to have strong communication and problem-solving skills.

"They also need to be able to resolve conflicts and to get along with each other," she adds. "When our kids get into a fight on the playground, because they are used to working out conflicts in their seminars, they can sit down and work through what they should have done. They are able to resolve the problem in most cases. Very rarely do we have discipline referrals."

The Paideia Program also has changed her as a school leader, Byrd observes. "I have become more patient," she says. "I have watched a program unfold; I have watched it grow. I have learned a lot about human nature, particularly when to back off, when teachers need a shot in the arm, when they are ready for adult seminars, what is realistic and what is not.

"As a leader, my ability to gain a view of the total picture has improved. And the total picture," she concludes, "is knowing that elementary children are the same as high school children. They need sound direction from teachers that will enable them to reach their fullest potential."

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Comprehensive School Reform Planning Tool for School Leaders

The following tool will help guide your planning as you consider the development and implementation of comprehensive school reform in your school or district.

Are We Ready for Comprehensive School Reform?	Fully	For the most part	Somewhat	Not at all
1. To what extent does our school have clearly articulated goals for:				
Curriculum and instruction	❑	❑	❑	❑
Professional development	❑	❑	❑	❑
Use of technology to support learning	❑	❑	❑	❑
Parent and community involvement	❑	❑	❑	❑
Student achievement	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. To what extent does our school have flexibility in terms of:				
Budgeting	❑	❑	❑	❑
Scheduling	❑	❑	❑	❑
Providing opportunities for professional development	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. To what extent is our staff ready to participate in a schoolwide change effort?	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. To what extent has our staff had experience in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-based reform?	❑	❑	❑	❑

Selecting a Comprehensive School Reform Model				
1. To what extent do the comprehensive reform models we are considering emphasize changes in:				
Curriculum and instruction	❑	❑	❑	❑
Professional development	❑	❑	❑	❑
Governance	❑	❑	❑	❑
School staff and organization	❑	❑	❑	❑
Parent and community involvement	❑	❑	❑	❑
Integrated services	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. To what extent have we examined the research base of the comprehensive reform models we are considering?	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. To what extent do the comprehensive reform models we are considering align with our school's improvement goals?	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. To what extent do the reform models we are considering align with district and/or state goals?	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. To what extent do the reform models we are considering require special commitments of time, equipment, and dollars?	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. To what extent do the reform models under consideration require special professional development activities?	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. To what extent do the reform models we are considering provide external technical assistance and training?	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. To what extent does the school staff have to develop curriculum and instruction to implement the reform models we are considering?	❑	❑	❑	❑

Providing Professional Development	Fully	For the most part	Somewhat	Not at all
1. To what extent is our school willing to invest its resources in professional development that fits the comprehensive school reform model of our choice?	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. To what extent are we willing to change existing structures to facilitate changes in classroom practices advocated by the comprehensive reform models we are considering?	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. To what extent is our school willing to make a sustained commitment to the comprehensive reform model we select?	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. To what extent is our school prepared to work with external consultants and design experts from the comprehensive reform model we select?	❑	❑	❑	❑
Mobilizing Internal and External Support				
1. To what extent have we assessed staff support for the comprehensive reform models we are considering, such as by faculty discussion and/or vote?	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. To what extent have we informed our parents and community partners about the principles, goals, and research base of the comprehensive reform models we are considering?	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. To what extent have we developed an action plan with timelines for building support from teachers, parents, and community members?	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. To what extent is our central administration/district organized to support our implementation of the comprehensive reform model we select in the areas of:				
Professional development	❑	❑	❑	❑
Evaluation	❑	❑	❑	❑
Personnel and staffing	❑	❑	❑	❑
Facilities	❑	❑	❑	❑
Identifying goals and benchmarks	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. To what extent does our plan for comprehensive school reform include state standards or benchmarks so that student achievement will be held to the same measures of accountability as that of other students in our state?	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. To what extent have we examined local standards to assess their compatibility and alignment with:				
State standards	❑	❑	❑	❑
Goals of the comprehensive reform models under consideration	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. To what extent are we willing to hold ourselves accountable to both state and local standards as we implement a comprehensive school reform model?	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. To what extent are we willing to make changes in our curriculum and instructional practices as advocated by the comprehensive reform models we are considering?	❑	❑	❑	❑
Assessment Strategies				
1. To what extent are our student assessment strategies aligned with the goals of the comprehensive reform models we are considering?	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. To what extent do our schoolwide assessment strategies gauge teacher readiness to implement the classroom practices advocated by the comprehensive reform models we are considering?	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. To what extent are we prepared to use assessment information (e.g., standardized tests, portfolios, performances, etc.) to guide changes in classroom practice?	❑	❑	❑	❑

NEW LEADERS FOR TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS

Comprehensive Reform: A Guide for School Leaders

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